

"Rhodes rage"
comes to
Britain

POLITICS P6



STAR WARS:
A SPECTACULAR
REBOOT?

FILM P33



My Christmas
with the
Thatchers

CHRISTMAS READ P28



MAGAZINE OF THE YEAR

THE WEEK

26 DECEMBER 2015 | ISSUE 1054 | £3.10

THE BEST OF THE BRITISH AND INTERNATIONAL MEDIA

The faces of 2015

Page 12



ALL YOU NEED TO KNOW ABOUT EVERYTHING THAT MATTERS

www.theweek.co.uk

THE BMW 4 SERIES GRAN COUPÉ.

**5-DOOR PRACTICALITY HAS NEVER
LOOKED SO DYNAMIC.**

The graceful sweep of a low stretched roofline, the muscular stance of a stylish Coupé, with the practicality of five doors. These are the hallmarks of the elegant BMW 4 Series Gran Coupé. Striking to look at but practical for company car drivers with CO₂ emissions as low as 106g/km, so Benefit in Kind Tax starts at just 19%.

Plus, with BMW ConnectedDrive and BMW Business Navigation as standard, staying connected while you're on the road is practical too.

Discover more at bmw.co.uk/4seriesgrancoupe





**BMW 4 Series
Gran Coupé**

bmw.co.uk



**The Ultimate
Driving Machine**

(6.3–3.6l/100km). Combined 34.0–70.6mpg (8.3–4.0l/100km). CO₂ emissions 193–106g/km. Figures may vary depending on driving style and conditions.

What happened

Cameron's EU pitch

David Cameron effectively fired the starting gun on the EU referendum campaign last week when he claimed he was “well on the way to a deal” that he would put to UK voters next year. He was speaking at the close of a two-day summit in Brussels at which he made his case for reform to the other 27 heads of government. They are amenable to three of his key aims – an end to “ever closer union”, protections for the City of London, and measures to cut EU red tape – but they unanimously rejected the PM's proposed four-year ban on migrant workers receiving tax credits. However, No. 10 insisted the latter plan would still be adopted in some form.

On Sunday, former defence secretary Liam Fox deplored the sight of the PM parading around Europe with a “political begging bowl”, and became the most senior Tory to signal that he would vote for Britain to quit the EU. His intervention increased the pressure on Cameron to suspend collective responsibility in order to allow serving ministers to campaign for Brexit. The former prime minister Sir John Major warned that Britain would be heading into “splendid isolation” if it left the EU.



PM: a precarious situation?

What the editorials said

The “phoney war” is almost over, said The Sunday Times. Cameron says he's satisfied with the progress of negotiations.

In a few weeks' time, a deal will be reached and the PM will “do what he always intended – campaign for Britain to remain in the EU”. “What a charade,” said the Daily Mail. Having once promised “full-on” treaty changes, to reform areas such as the Common Agricultural Policy, Cameron has now given up trying to win any real concessions. If this referendum is to be “anything but a cynical, one-sided sham”, we must at least have an open, honest debate about the EU in the ensuing months. It would be “a grotesque affront to democracy” if Eurosceptic ministers were to remain gagged.

What with all the worries about migration and terrorism at the moment, European leaders could have done without this British distraction, said The Guardian. But Cameron's peers appreciate that he needs some symbolic concessions to present to voters, and will no doubt oblige. They'll happily give Britain an opt-out on “ever closer union”, for example, since that concept has “been effectively off the agenda in the EU for years”. If such gestures are needed to protect “an imperfect union that is nevertheless better than none at all”, then so be it.

What happened

A peace plan for Syria

The UN Security Council endorsed a peace plan for Syria for the first time last Friday. The resolution, drafted by the US and approved by Russia, was passed unanimously. Under the plan, a ceasefire would start in January, to be followed by formal talks between President Assad's government and rebel groups. The ceasefire would not include Isis, the al-Qa'eda-linked al-Nusra Front, or any forces fighting those groups. A unity government would follow in six months, and elections in 18 months. At the Security Council, US Secretary of State John Kerry acknowledged that “sharp differences” remained over Syria – “especially about the future of President Assad”.

The UN also brokered a peace deal between the two main warring factions in Libya last week. The agreement came amid concern at Isis's growing influence in the country; its fighters control the city of Sirte, and in recent weeks have threatened the strategically vital oil town of Ajdabiya.



Kerry, right, with Russia's Sergey Lavrov

What the editorials said

In “the world of fantasy diplomacy” that Kerry and President Obama inhabit, this Syria deal “apparently counts as a victory”, said The Wall Street Journal. The country is to have a ceasefire, free and fair elections, and an “inclusive and non-sectarian government” – all within 18 months. As for how this miracle is to be achieved, these are merely “modalities” to be sorted out. Meanwhile, Russia and Iran can take great satisfaction from the fact that the US has surrendered on a long-held point of principle: it no longer insists that President Assad should step down.

Clearly, the path ahead will be “complicated”, said The Economist. It is unclear, for instance, whether Assad would be allowed to run in future elections, and which rebel groups are “moderate” enough to be included in the peace process. Even so, any progress on “the path to peace” is clearly “welcome”. If the deal were to lead only to a ceasefire between Assad and most rebel groups, allowing them all to turn their firepower on Isis, that would be worthwhile, said The Washington Post. “For now, however, even that looks like a long shot.”

It wasn't all bad

In the weeks before Christmas, a woman gathered enough free coupons to claim a record-breaking £1,164.39-worth of supermarket goods – which she then gave to the homeless. Holly Smith, 30, collected up to 300 Tesco vouchers a day by scouring the internet for offers. She then spent more than six hours in her local Tesco store in Lowestoft collecting all the free items. She donated all her loot to the Benjamin Foundation, which helps young homeless people in Norfolk.

Some of the secrets of the Queen's Christmas message have been revealed. Viewers may think they're getting a glimpse of Her Majesty's festive displays, but in fact, it's the TV production company behind the broadcasts that decorates the set. Carol Golder, who worked behind the scenes for 22 years, told The Sunday Times that one year she dressed the tree with baubles left over from Terry Wogan's office party; and though the Palace supplied some genuine Christmas cards, Golder always brought in and added a few of her own family's, to create a more festive feel.



A group of unknown inmates incarcerated in a maximum security prison in Malawi have been nominated for a Grammy. The Zomba Prison Band will compete in the world music category, going up against artists of international renown, including Ladysmith Black Mambazo. Sixteen inmates wrote and performed the songs for the album *I Have No Everything Here*, in 2013. But its producer, Ian Brennan, isn't sure that they have even been informed of their nomination, as direct communication with inmates is forbidden.

What the commentators said

"I don't know what bitter irony tastes like when consumed with *filet de biche*," said Dominic Lawson in *The Sunday Times*, but that must have been the flavour in Cameron's mouth at his summit dinner last week. There he was, suffering "ritual humiliation" in the cause of winning a referendum that he conceded three years ago in a desperate attempt to shoot UKIP's fox. Yet even as he talked to EU leaders, UKIP was imploding, with its sole MP, Douglas Carswell, calling for Nigel Farage to be ousted as leader. Cameron "must be wondering how he allowed such a chaotic movement to push him into the situation in which he now finds himself".

And what a precarious situation it is, said Andrew Grice in *The Independent*. Cameron has a "trump card", which is that EU leaders are desperate to avoid a destabilising "Brexit" crisis. But his problems are mounting at home. Many Tory MPs have been waiting to see what emerges from Cameron's negotiations before deciding how to vote in the referendum. Now that it's becoming clear the PM "will not achieve all of his shopping list, which is already seen as minimalist by many", his colleagues may cut up rough. Public expectations are another problem. Focus groups show that "voters have clocked the 'four-year wait' proposal, so many of them will also be disappointed if it doesn't happen". The "In" campaign has its work cut out, agreed Martin Kettle in *The Guardian*. To win a referendum next year in the wake of three decades "of media-driven anti-European prejudice is no small task".

Cameron certainly can't afford to be complacent, said Jenni Russell in *The Times*, but the odds are stacked in his favour. People's "instinctive caution" will favour the "In" campaign. There's a big difference between telling a pollster you will vote for Brexit and actually doing it (see page 6). In Britain's last referendum on Europe, in 1975, polls nine months before the vote "suggested a clear margin – 57% to 43% – in favour of leaving". In the event, the "stay" side won comfortably, with 67% to 33% in favour. "It's a reminder that polling figures months before a vote tell us nothing about the result, only about a dissatisfaction with the status quo."

What the commentators said

America is in no position to call the shots in Syria, said Bilal Y. Saab in *Newsweek*. The most important players are those that have "committed significant political capital and material resources" to the conflict: Russia and Iran, who provided military support to Assad; and Saudi Arabia, Qatar and Turkey, who have funded and supplied arms to the rebels. The Sunni Arab powers want Assad to go, and they want a political system that gives rights and influence to the Sunni majority. Iran, meanwhile, wants a regime that doesn't plot against it, and that will allow it to carry on supplying Hezbollah's militants in Lebanon. Russia wants to keep its naval base in Tartus, which allows it "to project power to the Mediterranean", and it wants Syria not to be governed by Sunni radicals. The "encouraging" thing is that all sides now agree that there is no military solution to the conflict. If Moscow and Tehran could agree to Assad leaving, and if the Sunnis could agree to respect Russia and Iran's "vital interests", then a deal could be done.

It's all very well for foreign nations to agree a "road map" to peace, said Zvi Bar'el in *Haaretz* (Tel Aviv). But it's the 150 militia groups fighting on the ground that have to lay down their weapons. The UN deal stipulates that Isis and the al-Nusra Front "are terror groups that must be fought". But that's where agreement ends. Russia defines nearly all of the groups opposing Assad as terrorists; Turkey deems the Kurds as the enemy. Foreign hopes for Syria rest upon the idea that there is a "moderate", anti-Isis, rebel group to support, said Mowaffaq Safadi in *The Guardian*. This is a fool's errand. There are a few ideologically driven fighters: Islamists, say, or pro-Assad Alawites. But most rebel fighters do not care about such affiliations. They only care about which group is most likely to "topple Assad", and to pay decent wages. The al-Nusra Front, for instance, is popular – because, unlike Isis, it is mainly made up of Syrians and is taking the fight to Assad. The truth is that Syria's "moderate" fighting force doesn't exist.

What next?

Cameron wants a draft deal to be agreed by the end of February, allowing for a referendum in early June, says *The Observer*. Downing Street is worried about holding the vote any later in 2016 because it fears there will be another surge of migration next year, probably reaching its peak in late summer, which could heighten anti-EU feeling.

Cameron's four-year curb on migrants' benefits was rejected as discriminatory, but various compromises have been floated. These include an "emergency brake" on immigration if public services are judged to be under strain. The problem for Cameron is that the EU would get to decide when those conditions were met.

What next?

Saudi Arabia last week announced plans to organise a military coalition of 34 Islamic nations to fight terrorism, says *The New York Times* – not just in Syria but across the Muslim world. There are, however, "many reasons to doubt how effective the plan will be". Some states that were supposed to be part of the coalition said that they were unaware of it.

In Syria, heavy fighting is expected to continue in the near future, says *Haaretz*, with every side trying "to increase their control over territory so as to reach the negotiating table with as many assets as possible".

THE WEEK

Did Scrooge get a raw deal? I can't help feeling so. Granted, he was unkind to Bob Cratchit and had an unnecessarily jaundiced view of Christmas. But his assumption that people, himself included, really aren't that nice, seems to me spot on. In fact, I'd go further and argue that a major source of the world's misery stems from the contrary belief that some people – namely ourselves and people who think as we do – are basically like Tiny Tim and family: good at heart, not venal, self-serving and self-justifying; and that people who don't think and feel as we do must therefore be horrid. When you listen to Benedict Cumberbatch harangue his audience about Syrian refugees and shout "F*** the politicians", when you attend to the rage that cascades over the internet, what you're hearing is the sound of people dumbfounded and furious that others aren't as nice as they are. It's as if, being nice, they'd act quite differently and be indifferent to their own self-interest were they to enter politics; as if, with them at the helm, the hard business of reconciling rival interests could be dispensed with.

Where Scrooge erred was not in his premise but his conclusion. It doesn't follow from the fact we're not nice that we must hate each other. The essence of comedy, the reason we laugh at the stupidities of our age (see p14), is the recognition that we tie ourselves to unattainable standards of virtue. Put differently, to accept that they aren't paragons of virtue doesn't stop me feeling well disposed to our loyal Week readers, or from wishing you all a very Merry Christmas.

Jeremy O'Grady

Editor-in-chief: Jeremy O'Grady
Editor: Caroline Law
Deputy editors: Harry Nicolle, Theo Tait
Consultant editor: Jimma Lewis
Assistant editor: Daniel Cohen **City editor:** Jane Lewis
Contributing editors: Charity Crewe, Thomas Hodgkinson, Simon Wilson, Rob McLuhan, William Underhill, Digby Warde-Alford **Editorial staff:** Aislinn O'Connell, Laura Inge, Tigger Ridgwell, Cordelia Jenkins **Picture editor:** Xandie Nutting **Art director:** Nathalie Fowler **Sub editor:** Karl Wilkin
Production editor: Michael Haydock
Founder and editorial director: Jolyon Connell
Production Manager: Lawrence Brookes **Snr Production Controller:** Ebony Bessant **Newsdesk Director:** David Barker **Direct Marketing Director:** Abi Spooner **Inserts:** Abdul Ahad **Classified:** Samantha Black, Emma Greenwood, Henry Haselock **Account Manager:** Ryan Gisborne-Ware **Display Group Head:** Caroline Fenner **Account Directors:** Sara Clayton, Wayne Russell, Jocelyn Sital-Singh
UK Ad Director: Marc Young
Executive Director – Head of Advertising: David Weeks
Chief Executive, The Week: Kerin O'Connor
COO: Brett Reynolds
Group CFO: Ian Leggett
Chief executive: James Tye
Dennis Publishing founder: Felix Dennis
THE WEEK Ltd, a subsidiary of Dennis Publishing Ltd, 30 Cleveland St, London W1T 4JD, Tel: 020-7907 6000.
Editorial: The Week Ltd, 2nd Floor, 32 Queensway, London W2 3RX, Tel: 020-7907 6180, email: editorialadmin@theweek.co.uk

Owing to the Christmas break, the next issue of *The Week* will not appear until 9 January 2016.



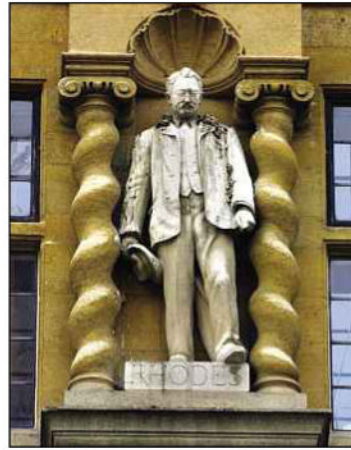
Subscriptions: 0844 844 0086; overseas +44(0)1795 592921; theweek@servicehelpline.co.uk
 The Week is licensed to The Week Limited by Dennis Publishing Limited. The Week is a registered trade mark of Felix Dennis.

26 December 2015 THE WEEK

Controversy of the week

The end of the Rhodes?

"It all started with some excrement," said Andrew Harding on BBC News online. Earlier this year, a student called Chumani Maxwele "scooped some poo" from a portable toilet in a run-down South African township, took it to the elegant campus of the University of Cape Town and smeared it over a statue of the university's benefactor – the arch British imperialist Cecil Rhodes, often called an "architect of apartheid". In doing so, Maxwele "ignited a furious and fascinating row about history, race and equality": copycats defaced colonial statues on other campuses; black students demonstrated against the symbolic legacy of white supremacy. In response to the demands of a newly formed "Rhodes must Fall" campaign, the statue of Rhodes was boarded up. And now "Rhodes rage" has spread to England. Student protesters in Oxford are calling for Oriel College – where Rhodes was a student and to which he left 2% of his fortune – to get rid of a small statue of its benefactor. And the Oriel authorities say they may comply with the demand, since the statue "can be seen as an uncritical celebration... of colonialism".



The Rhodes statue in Oriel College

The protestors have a point, said John Simpson in *New Statesman*. Even by the standards of his day, Rhodes was not "a nice man". Outspokenly racist, he appalled his own secretary by speaking "with apparent relish about slaughtering black people". But he was also a complex figure: he was almost certainly gay; he supported Irish home rule; and he was a Liberal. And his views were far less abominable than those of two men represented in much grander statues outside Oriel's dining hall, said Daniel Hannan in *The Daily Telegraph*. Edward II and Charles I were such absolutist monsters, their subjects killed them. Does that mean Oriel is endorsing their brutality by keeping their statues? Of course not. You're missing the point, said David Priestland in *The Guardian*. It's the political context that matters. It would be absurd to remove a statue of a brute like, say, Henry VIII, because 16th century politics have no bearing on our own. But the politics of a man like Cecil Rhodes clearly do. Statues are erected "to promote particular ideals and values". They have huge symbolic significance. "The lesson for Britain is that parts of the past are not dead and symbols [do] matter."

But where does this sort of "cultural cleansing" stop, asked Camilla Long in *The Sunday Times*. In America, students are demanding that statues of Thomas Jefferson be removed from colleges because he was a slave owner. Europe's art galleries have been ridding works in their collections of titles deemed offensive: at the Rijksmuseum in Amsterdam, *Young Negro Girl* is now called *Young Girl Holding a Fan*; at the Tate, a portrait of a slave first exhibited as *Head of a Black* is now listed as *Head of a Man*. That's quite wrong: facing up to the uncomfortable aspects of our past is an essential part of our education. "Seeing what people did wrong is just as important as seeing what they did right." If you eradicate the statues and the words you don't like, you eradicate part of history.

Boring but important

The Prince's papers

Prince Charles has been receiving confidential cabinet papers for decades, a freedom of information request has revealed. Like his mother, the heir to the throne is on what a hitherto secret Whitehall manual refers to as the "standard circulation list": this means he receives all cabinet memoranda, including confidential proposals for new legislation. Labour MP Paul Flynn said Charles's access to these documents – which are not released to the public for 20 years – made him Britain's "best-informed lobbyist". The Cabinet Office, however, said it was necessary that the heir to the throne be "properly briefed".

Heavier fines for texting

The Government is planning to impose heavier fines and stiffer penalties on drivers who use mobile phones at the wheel. In 2014, 492 accidents were caused by the driver talking or texting on a phone – up 40% since 2010 – and 21 were fatal. Under the Government's proposals, fines will increase from £100 to £150; car and van drivers will face up to four penalty points (up from three); while HGV drivers will face up to six points – double the current maximum.

Spirit of the age

Charities have been trawling public records of wills so that they can chase bereaved relatives for gifts, *The Times* reports. The practice came to light when a woman was sent a letter by the RSPCA, asking her if her father was dead yet, and enclosing a Stamped Addressed Envelope for her "kind reply". The woman's mother had died four months earlier, and under the terms of her will, if her husband did not survive her, the RSPCA was to be given £500. The unnamed recipient of the letter – whose father was seriously ill at the time – described it as "offensive and intrusive", but fundraisers insist they need to scour wills (which become public property once probate has been granted) to ensure that relatives hand over charity bequests.

Good week for:

Harrison Ford, who looks set to earn £23m from the new *Star Wars* film. Disney was so anxious for him to reprise his role as Han Solo that it offered him a £16.7m fee, plus 0.5% of the gross earnings of a film that is likely to make £1.3bn (see page 33).

Andy Murray, who was voted BBC Sports Personality of the Year for the second time, weeks after helping Britain secure its first Davis Cup victory in 79 years. Murray won 361,446 votes; the outspoken boxer Tyson Fury came fourth, with 72,330.

Bad week for:

Sepp Blatter, the president of Fifa, and **Michel Platini**, head of Uefa, European football's governing body, who have been banned from the game for eight years. Fifa's ethics committee found that Blatter's £1.3m payment to Platini, his one-time heir apparent, in 2011 had no legal basis and was an abuse of both men's posts.

Coal mining, with the closure of Britain's last deep mine. The Kellingley Colliery, in Yorkshire, once employed 3,000 people. By this month, just 451 remained. Some of those working their final shifts had first gone down the pit on the day it opened, in 1965.

José Mourinho, who was fired as manager of Chelsea FC, four months into a terrible season that had left last year's Premiership champions teetering on the edge of the relegation zone.

Hitler, who really did only have one ball, as the wartime song insisted – though there's no evidence that the other was in the Albert Hall. Recently unearthed records of a medical exam Hitler was given in 1923 note that he suffered from "right-side cryptorchidism", or an undescended right testicle.

Poll watch

Young, white British men are the least popular group in the country, according to a poll. YouGov explored public attitudes towards 48 groups, categorised by gender, age, ethnicity and religion. They found that people considered white British men in their 20s to be the most lazy, rude and promiscuous people in the country; the most likely to get drunk; and, along with black Caribbean men in their 20s, the most likely to take drugs. The most popular group was white women in their 60s.

47% of voters want Britain to leave the EU. Only **38%** want to stay in. However, a third say they could "easily be persuaded to change their minds", and **53%** think leaving carries a greater risk than staying. *Lord Ashcroft Polls*

The Hague, the Netherlands

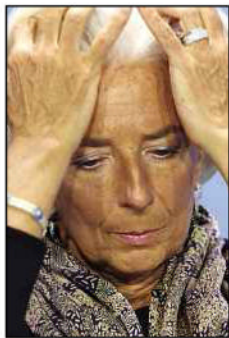
Help for the elderly: Two supermarkets in The Hague are training their checkout staff to spot signs of distress in elderly customers as part of a pilot project which the organisers hope will be expanded across the Netherlands. Under the scheme – a joint initiative by The Hague’s city council, the *Royaal Zorg* care organisation and Albert Heijn supermarkets – the cashiers will be taught to spot signs of forgetfulness, loneliness or self-neglect among older shoppers, and then direct them as necessary to specialist volunteers. The idea came from a volunteer who works as a cashier. “She noticed that an old man who shopped there was getting rapidly thinner, buying tins rather than fresh food, and then one day he had to be taken by ambulance from the [shop],” Sumeyra Yazir, of *Royaal Zorg*, told *The Daily Telegraph*. “It really shocked her.”

Halti mountain, Norway

Nice neighbours plan big present: Some thoughtful Norwegians have launched a campaign to give Finland a mountain peak to celebrate the centenary of Finnish independence (from Russia) in 1917. Part of the Halti mountain already lies in Finland, and forms the country’s current highest point. However, the peak of the mountain is 20 metres across the border in Norway – where it does not even make the top 200 list of the highest peaks in that much more mountainous country. Campaigners, led by Björn Geirr Harsson, a retired geodesist who worked for the Norwegian Mapping Authority, are calling on the government in Oslo to agree to shift the border by a fraction to help out. “Not only will this be a great gift, but how many countries can brag about having given a mountain as a gift?” the campaign’s Facebook page reads, adding: “Let us take Finland to new heights!”

Moscow

Plain-speaking president: Russia’s president Vladimir Putin has claimed that Turkish forces shot down a Russian military jet last month in order to please Ankara’s allies in Washington. Speaking at his annual marathon press conference, he vowed to pursue his feud with Turkey for as long as President Erdogan remains in power – and claimed that Erdogan’s slow Islamisation of the country would have Kemal Atatürk turning in his grave. In other remarks, Putin appeared to concede for the first time that Russian forces – and not just “volunteers” – are on the ground in eastern Ukraine. He also took the opportunity to hail his admirer Donald Trump as the “absolute leader” in the US presidential race.



Paris

Crisis for Lagarde: Christine Lagarde, the head of the International Monetary Fund, has been ordered to stand trial in France on negligence charges. These date back to her time as Nicolas Sarkozy’s finance minister, when she was asked to intervene in a battle between Sarkozy supporter and tycoon Bernard Tapie, and the state-owned *Crédit Lyonnais* bank. Tapie accused the bank of undervaluing his stake in Adidas when the ailing sports firm was sold in the 1990s. Lagarde (pictured) agreed to send the case to arbitration, which led to Tapie being given €403m of state funds in compensation. Her alleged negligence was in not challenging that award.

Madrid

Unclear election: The ruling conservative People’s Party (PP) won the most seats in Spain’s general election this week – but was left with far too few to form a majority government owing to a surge in support for two upstart parties. With 99.9% of the vote counted, the PP had won 123 seats in the 350-seat parliament – down from 186, and well short of the 176 needed for a majority. The Socialists – the other party in Spain’s normally two-party system – came second, with 90 seats, leaving the anti-austerity party *Podemos* (69 seats) and the centrist *Ciudadanos* (40) potentially holding the balance of power in a future coalition. Turnout was about 73%. The PP’s leader, Prime Minister Mariano Rajoy, has vowed to try to form a government – but he faces an uphill task. “Spain is not going to be the same any more and we are very happy,” said Pablo Iglesias, *Podemos*’s pony-tailed leader.

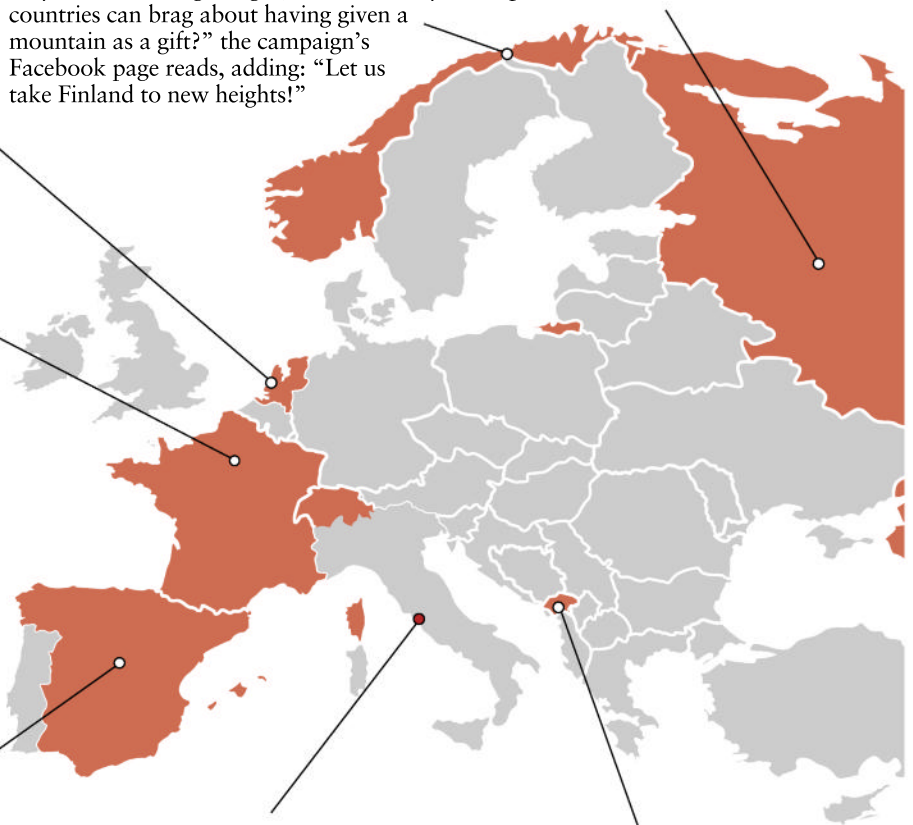


Vatican City

Teresa to be saint: Pope Francis has recognised a second miracle attributed to Mother Teresa, clearing the way for her to be made a saint in 2016. Teresa (pictured), who died in 1997, was beatified in 2003 after John Paul II judged that an Indian woman had been cured of a tumour owing to Teresa’s supernatural “intercession”. The second miracle involves the healing of a Brazilian man who was suffering from multiple brain tumours, in 2008. The canonisation of Teresa, a Macedonian-born nun famed for her charity work in India, is now expected to take place in September as part of the Pope’s Jubilee Year of Mercy.

Podgorica

Russia urges Nato referendum: Russia has urged Montenegro to hold a referendum on whether to join Nato, arguing that there are “deep divisions” in the Balkan country over membership. The Montenegro government is currently involved in accession talks, and polls suggest a narrow majority in favour of joining. However, earlier this month demonstrators opposed to the alliance took to the streets of the capital, Podgorica, some carrying banners reading “Nato Killers!” – a reference to Nato’s bombing of Serbia and Montenegro during the Kosovo war in 1999. The tiny country has enjoyed good relations with Moscow since its split from Serbia in 2006, and the past decade has seen an influx of Russian money, homebuyers and tourists. But Montenegro angered the Kremlin by supporting EU sanctions against Russia over its interventions in Ukraine.



New York

Trump's "astonishing" health: Having repeatedly castigated his rivals for their lack of "energy", Republican presidential hopeful Donald Trump has now published a glowing assessment of his own fitness. Full medical disclosure has become the norm for candidates, but never has a medical endorsement been as fulsome as that of Dr Harold N. Bornstein's for his billionaire patient of nearly four decades. "Over the past 39 years, I am pleased to report that Mr Trump has had no significant medical problems," he wrote, noting that his recent "blood pressure and laboratory results were astonishingly excellent", and that the 69-year-old has never "used alcohol or tobacco". In conclusion he felt able to "state unequivocally [that Trump] will be the healthiest individual ever elected to the presidency". Yet Trump did once fail a medical – for service in the Vietnam war; his campaign team claims he was deemed unfit for combat owing to bone spurs in his feet.

**New York**

Hated fund manager arrested: Martin Shkreli, the hedge fund manager who attracted global opprobrium for hiking up the price of a medicine used by some Aids patients, was arrested last week on suspicion of fraud. Shkreli (pictured) became a symbol of ruthless capitalist greed after acquiring rights to a decades-old drug, Daraprim, which is used to treat toxoplasmosis, raising the price from \$13.50 a pill to \$750 – and then jeering at his detractors and boasting of his profits. He was arrested by the FBI on suspicion of involvement in an \$11m Ponzi-style fraud; he denied the charges and was released on a \$5m bail.

New York

Healthcare for 9/11 workers: Emergency workers who responded to the attacks on the World Trade Centre on 11 September 2001 are to have their free healthcare coverage extended, permanently. Last week Congress voted to renew the Zadroga Act, granting lifelong coverage to those who worked at Ground Zero on 9/11 and in the months afterwards. Named after James Zadroga, a firefighter who died of respiratory disease, the act lapsed in October; Congress's failure to renew it had caused widespread anger. "This is the Christmas the 9/11 responders deserved: some peace of mind for each and every hero," said New York senator Charles Schumer.

Riverside, California

Neighbour charged: The guns used by the radicalised Muslim couple who shot dead 14 workers at a Christmas party on 2 December were bought back in 2011 or 2012, it has emerged, for use in a planned attack on a local college that didn't go ahead. Last week California police arrested the couple's neighbour – Enrique Marquez, 24 – on suspicion of illegally purchasing the two assault rifles used by Syed Farook and his wife Tashfeen Malik. Marquez confessed he had done so when he and Farook were plotting earlier attacks – but denied any involvement in the recent atrocity. Marquez met Farook as a teenager; it seems he fell under his friend's influence, and converted to Islam in 2007.

Iquitos, Peru

Jungle killing: A young British man was stabbed to death last week while on a spiritual retreat in the Peruvian Amazon. Unais Gomes, a 26-year-old Cambridge graduate, is believed to have drunk a hallucinogenic brew as part of a "shamanic" ceremony. Under its influence, it seems he grabbed a knife and attacked a Canadian friend, Joshua Stevens, 29; Stevens, who had also drunk the brew, then grabbed the knife from him, and stabbed him during the struggle. Both men were guests at Phoenix Ayahuasca, an alternative health centre near Iquitos, in the Amazonian jungle, which describes itself as a "safe and supportive place to experience plant medicines and explore the true nature of the self".

**Brasilia**

Court boost to Rousseff: In a major setback to the Brazilian opposition's long-running attempt to impeach President Dilma Rousseff, the nation's Supreme Court last week scrapped an impeachment commission that it found had been unfairly loaded with Rousseff's political opponents from the Congress. It also handed more powers to the Senate, which is controlled by Rousseff's party, to block the impeachment process. Some of the president's close allies have been

arrested and charged in the Petrobras scandal that has rocked Brazil over the past year, though Rousseff (pictured) is not directly implicated. She is accused of breaking budget laws in order to boost spending during her 2014 re-election campaign.

Buenos Aires

Tough medicine: Argentina's currency, the peso, fell by some 30% against the US dollar in one day last week, after the country's newly elected centre-right president, Mauricio Macri, ordered that capital controls be lifted. For the past four years, a so-called "dollar clamp" has fixed the exchange rate by limiting the amount of US dollars that can be sold. Ending the "clamp" is one of the measures which Macri hopes will revitalise the country's flagging economy, though it risks fuelling inflation in the short term. He has also stacked his new cabinet with former chief executives and other business people, to help him drive forward a "pro-business" agenda aimed at attracting more foreign investment and improving relations with the US and Europe.





Bethlehem

A Christmas symbol: Owing to the recent surge in violence in the Occupied Territories, festive celebrations in the holy city of Bethlehem have been muted this year, with some events cancelled

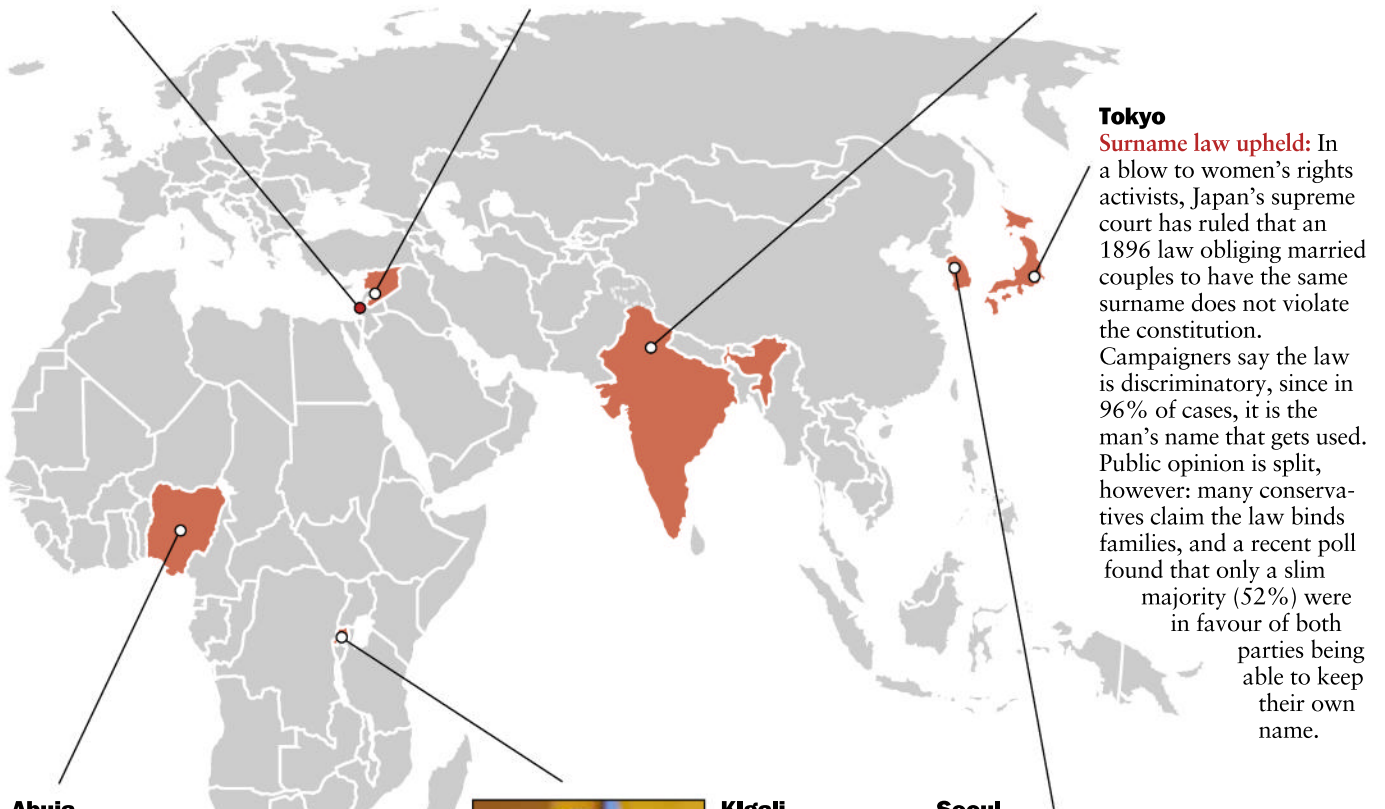
and hotels only half full. However, the Palestinian town's mayor insisted the Christmas tree in Manger Square be lit – as a symbol of hope. “When we lit the tree, we gave a message that we cannot be without hope,” explained Vera Baboun, who is a Christian. “We have to be with hope, despite everything surrounding us.”

Damascus

Refugee crisis unprecedented: More than 60 million people around the world have been forced to leave their homes this year, with war and other violent conflicts being the main driving factors, according to a UN report published last week. The figure is the highest ever recorded by the UN, and means that around one in every 122 of the world's population is now a refugee. In recent years Syria's civil war, which began in 2011, has been the single biggest driver of mass displacement: some 4.2 million Syrians had fled abroad from Damascus and elsewhere by the middle of this year, and 7.6 million had been internally displaced. Other countries where conflicts are creating refugee crises include Ukraine, Afghanistan, Somalia, Iraq, South Sudan, Burundi, the Central African Republic and the Democratic Republic of Congo.

New Delhi

Rapist freed: The youngest of the men convicted of the rape and murder of a young student on a bus in New Delhi in 2012 was released from a correctional centre on Sunday. As a minor at the time of the crime, he faced a maximum sentence of three years, which he has now served. However, campaigners had hoped the law would be changed to keep him in prison, and hundreds of people, including the victims' parents, demonstrated in protest. Days earlier, they had publicly named their daughter for the first time. “I say this in front of you all that her name was Jyoti Singh,” her mother, Asha, told a public gathering in Delhi. “There is no need for us to feel any shame. It is the perpetrators of heinous crimes who must feel ashamed of themselves.” The released rapist has now been moved to a rehabilitation home.



Tokyo

Surname law upheld: In a blow to women's rights activists, Japan's supreme court has ruled that an 1896 law obliging married couples to have the same surname does not violate the constitution. Campaigners say the law is discriminatory, since in 96% of cases, it is the man's name that gets used. Public opinion is split, however: many conservatives claim the law binds families, and a recent poll found that only a slim majority (52%) were in favour of both parties being able to keep their own name.

Abuja

Reprieve for soldiers: A reprieve has been granted to 66 Nigerian soldiers who had been sentenced to death for refusing to fight the militant group Boko Haram. The soldiers had mutinied in response to dozens of their colleagues being killed in a Boko Haram ambush, after being ordered to drive into a dangerous area at night. This week, the military authorities announced that their sentences would be commuted to ten years in jail each, and that hundreds of other soldiers accused of mutiny and desertion will have their cases reviewed. Nigerian soldiers have long complained of being ill-equipped to fight Boko Haram – something Nigeria's President Buhari has blamed on rampant fraud within the billion-dollar arms procurement process.



Kigali

President for life? Rwanda's President Paul Kagame has pushed through a constitutional amendment that could enable him to remain in power until 2034. The 58-year-old (pictured) – who halted the Hutu genocide of Tutsis in the 1990s and whose government has been given hundreds of millions of pounds in aid by Western nations – had been due to stand down in 2017. But earlier this month, he announced a referendum on changing the rules limiting presidential terms, which was voted on just ten days later and passed by a landslide.

Seoul

Shock therapy: Some employers in South Korea are sending their staff on therapy awaydays in which they are invited to take part in their own mock funerals. Typically, employees are asked to write farewell letters to their loved ones, to get a sense of how their deaths would affect others, and to lie in closed coffins, contemplating the ever after. Though it all sounds very morbid, the therapy is designed to help participants appreciate life – and thereby curb South Korea's suicide rate, which is the highest in the industrialised world. The Korean Neuropsychiatric Association recently found that one in four of those it surveyed suffered from high stress levels, with work-related anxiety a prime cause. One employer who sent his staff to undergo the “funeral” therapy, Park Chun-woong, said he hoped it would help “reset” their attitudes.



Don't be a stranger.

STAY IN TOUCH WITH
TRANSATLANTIC
WI-FI.

Broken dreams of a white Christmas

Andrew Martin

The Independent on Sunday

When I was a child, says Andrew Martin, I used to feel sorry for Australians. What was the point of Christmas, I felt, if it didn't have snow or at least the prospect of snow... if there was no link between one's own experience of Christmas and the wintry images on the Christmas cards propped up on the mantelpiece? Besides, I'm from the North, which is where cold is meant to come from, and where men are meant to be tough in dealing with it. So I still love the idea of giving myself "manly chores at Christmas: scraping the ice off the drive, bringing in the coal..." Yet as I write this, I'm smoking a cigar at the bottom of my garden without even needing to wear a jumper. In Lincoln an ice rink melted last week and had to be closed, as did the ice rink at the Tower of London. This has (so far) been the mildest December in Britain since 1960, and "in many counties, daffodils are in full bloom". When my sons were small, I used to love the ritual of fetching the sled from the attic. Now they are young men, and "the sled seems to disappear further in to the recesses of the attic every year".

Scientists with their heads in the clouds

Simon Jenkins

The Guardian

The media has gone "berserk" over the British astronaut, Major Tim Peake. Giddy reports make him out to be "Mo Farah, Luke Skywalker and Sir Isaac Newton" rolled into one; the business minister promises to funnel more billions into our space industry. Sorry to be a party pooper, says Simon Jenkins, but what exactly are we celebrating here? The sight of rockets blasting into orbit is undeniably impressive, but the truth is that manned space travel is a ludicrous waste of money. Using robots is cheaper, more efficient and a whole lot safer. In a desperate attempt to mask this reality, lobbyists for the space industry harp on about the romance of exploring new frontiers and about the "spin-off" inventions (cures for arthritis, memory foam, freeze-dried food) this gives rise to. But then, they claimed the Moon programme led to the invention of Teflon, until it was "pointed out that non-stick pans were on sale in 1945". Just think "what really useful things might have been invented" – in neurology or immunology or geriatrics – for the price of sending humans into space. Manned space travel may be awesome, but it's also the mother of political vanity projects.

Cheer up, at least we're not fighting Tehran

David Blair

The Daily Telegraph

Syria is a charnel house. Terrorists "rule swathes of Iraq". Libya is in chaos. Yet it could be worse, says David Blair: a notable foreign policy success of 2015 has been avoiding an all-out war with Iran. Had Iran not halted its nuclear programme, Israel might well have bombed its nuclear plants, Iran would have retaliated and the US, and possibly Britain, would have been dragged into war. But the West's strategy for containing Iran's nuclear ambitions prevented all this. It was based on our intelligence success in detecting Iran's hidden nuclear plants in 2002, and again in 2009: this led to an escalating programme of Western sanctions. To buy time for those sanctions to bite, a second, covert strategy was employed. The "Stuxnet" computer virus was infiltrated into Iran's Natanz plant and five Iranian nuclear scientists were murdered, probably by Israeli intelligence agents. It was "one of the most ruthless and determined exercises in power politics in modern history" – but it worked. Last week, the International Atomic Energy Agency reported that Iran was no longer researching nuclear weapons. By forcing Tehran to the table, we "may have avoided a terrible war".

Conspiracy: Donald's trump card

Ben Judah

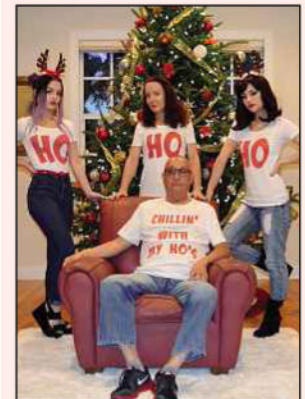
The Independent

Donald Trump was meant to be the oddball candidate who would peak, then fade away. Yet he's still with us, says Ben Judah, and the pundits are "scrabbling for answers" to explain why. Some say it's because Americans have lost their optimism: just 25% now think that "their side" is winning. Others cite the withering of the white majority: in 1980, 83% of Americans were white, now only 63% are. But the real clue to Trump's enduring success, in my view, is his love of fantasy. He claims that when the Twin Towers fell in 9/11, crowds of Muslims began cheering; he insists that as Barack Obama wasn't born in the US, he's a fraudster who should resign as president. Scary stuff, but conspiracy theories thrive in societies that have lost confidence in themselves. And as surveys show, that is especially true of an America still reeling from the banking collapse and the War on Terror. Some 40% of Americans believe Washington is covering up the cure for cancer; almost 20% think al-Qaeda wasn't responsible for the Twin Tower attacks. "Trump is a son and hero to Conspiracy America."

IT MUST BE TRUE... I read it in the tabloids

A Canadian company has been cashing in on China's pollution crisis by importing cans of "fresh mountain air" to sell in smog-choked Beijing and Shanghai. A bottle of Vitality Air's "premium oxygen" costs the equivalent of £18.50, while its standard air, bottled in Banff, costs £15.85. The firm claims to have sold out of its first shipment of 500 bottles almost as soon as they became available online last week. More stock is en route.

A man has been arrested in Florida for trying to break into a county jail. Patrick Rempe, 24, smashed his car into the sliding glass door entrance, and when that failed to shatter, drove into the jail fence. He then tried to scale the fence but got tangled in razor wire at the top. Taken into custody, he reportedly told police he had hoped to "visit friends who were in the jail". He wasn't just feeling the Christmas spirit, however: police said he also admitted being high on the synthetic drug flakka.



A family from Florida posted their 2015 Christmas card online last week – and secured 2.4 million views within 24 hours as social media users debated whether it was the most tasteless card ever. The card shows the Yoshida family posing in traditional fashion around a tree. The two adult daughters and their mother wear T-shirts that, together, read "Ho Ho Ho", while their father's reads "Chillin' With My Ho's". Additional photos uploaded to Instagram show the backs of their tops all read "Merry Christmas Bitches".

It was the year that David Cameron and Jeremy Corbyn won and a Minnesota dentist shot Cecil the lion. Here we take

January

The slogan “*Je suis Charlie*” is used around the world to express outrage at the attack by Islamic fundamentalists on the offices of the satirical magazine *Charlie Hebdo* in Paris. Its editor, **Stéphane Charbonnier**, is among ten people killed. **Marine Le Pen**, leader of France’s National Front, urges her supporters to boycott the subsequent “unity march”, attended by more than 50 world leaders, because she was not invited. The Greek election is won by anti-austerity party **Syriza**, led



by former communist **Alexis Tsipras**. He installs **Yanis Varoufakis**, a leather jacket-wearing Marxist, as his finance minister, promising a referendum on Greek debt.

February

The 87th Academy Awards are criticised for being the least diverse in years, with all 20 acting nominations going to white actors. Director **Ava DuVernay** and actor **David Oyelowo** miss out on nominations in their categories for *Selma*, about the story of Martin Luther King’s march for civil rights. **David Cameron** remarks that Russia is trying to make “some sort of point” after Ukraine peace talks fail and **Vladimir Putin** flies bombers off the coast of Cornwall. As the general election campaigns pick up, Labour’s deputy leader **Harriet Harman** is widely ridiculed for heading out in a pink bus to canvass women voters. Other politicians fare worse: Labour MP **Jack Straw** and

Conservative **Malcolm Rifkind** are caught in a cash-for-access media sting (they’re later cleared of wrongdoing), and Green Party leader **Natalie Bennett** suffers a “mind blank” and is unable to explain her party’s policies during an excruciating live radio interview.

March

Jeremy Clarkson is sacked from BBC’s *Top Gear* for punching a producer who’d failed to provide him with a hot dinner. Six months later he signs a deal to present a new series for Amazon, for a reported £9.6m a year. At 50, **Monica Bellucci** becomes the oldest ever Bond girl, a title she asks to be changed to “Bond lady”. Before she has formally announced her intention to run for the US presidency, **Hillary Clinton** comes under fire as it emerges she bypassed her official email account while she was secretary of state, and stored communication instead on a private server at her home. The remains of **Richard III**, discovered beneath a car park in 2012, are laid to rest in Leicester Cathedral amid much pomp and ceremony.

April

Andreas Lubitz, a pilot with a history of depression who has been declared unfit to fly by a doctor, locks his co-pilot out of the cockpit and crashes Germanwings flight 9525 into the French Alps, killing all 144 passengers and six crew members. **Zayn Malik** announces he is leaving the pop group **One Direction**. Fans are disconsolate until astrophysicist **Stephen Hawking** comforts them with the thought that theoretical physics could prove the existence of an alternate universe where the band remains united. **Nicola Sturgeon** is

the unexpected winner of the first televised leaders’ debate of the election campaign: viewers praise the SNP chief’s forthright style. At 71, **Ranulph Fiennes** becomes the oldest Briton to complete the “toughest footrace on Earth”, running 156 miles across the Sahara desert.

May

Princess Charlotte Elizabeth Diana of Cambridge, fourth in line to the throne, is born amid another frenzied media stake-out at St Mary’s Hospital, Paddington. In the final days before the general election, **Ed Miliband** unveils his six key campaign pledges engraved on an 8ft-high stone tablet. “Who does he think he is?” asks **Boris Johnson**. “Moses?” When exit polls come out, **Paddy Ashdown** says he’ll eat his hat if they prove correct. They do: in defiance of all the opinion polls, the Tories get a 12-seat majority, and **David Cameron** hails the “sweetest victory”. **Nick Clegg**, **Ed Miliband** and **Nigel Farage** all resign as party leaders – although **Farage** is back at the UKIP helm within days. Twenty-year-old **Mhairi Black** of the SNP becomes the country’s youngest MP, unseating Lib Dem **Douglas Alexander**. Her maiden speech, in which she fiercely attacks Tory austerity policies, becomes a viral hit. **Ross Ulbricht**, a 31-year-old former boy scout from Texas, is discovered to be the mastermind behind Silk Road, an Amazon-like online market for drugs. He is sentenced to life in prison without parole.

June

Sepp Blatter says he’ll resign as president of Fifa – four days after winning the fifth term of his 17-year reign – following accusations of “rampant, systemic corruption”. He fails to do so, however,

and is eventually suspended four months later. **Caitlyn Jenner** – formerly the Olympic athlete **Bruce Jenner**



– unveils her new female identity when she appears on the cover of *Vanity Fair* in a white silk bodysuit. **Rachel Dolezal**, a US civil rights activist and former African American Studies lecturer, is outed as white by her parents, but insists she identifies as black. “Let me tell you about my trouble with girls,” says the British scientist **Tim Hunt** at the World Conference of Science Journalists in Seoul. “Three things happen when they are in the lab. You fall in love with them, they fall in love with you, and when you criticise them, they cry.” His words trigger a furore and he is forced to resign his honorary post at University College London. **Donald Trump** announces that he is running for US president. The real-estate mogul tells his supporters he won’t need to rely on their donations: “I’m using my own money. I’m really rich.”

July

A “new” **Harper Lee** novel, thought to be a sequel to *To Kill a Mockingbird* (though written before), is published. *Go Set A Watchman* dismisses **Atticus Finch** fans (and his many namesakes) by reintroducing the lawyer as a disgruntled old racist. The cover of *New York* magazine features pictures of 35 women who accuse **Bill Cosby** of sexual assault or rape. In the first exclusively Conservative Budget in two



shock election victories, Jeremy Clarkson lost his Top Gear job a look at some of the people who made the headlines in 2015

decades, George Osborne tries to soften the blow of £12bn of welfare cuts by announcing a hike in the minimum wage. Labour peer Lord Sewell resigns from the House of Lords after a tabloid sting reveals footage of him cavorting with call girls and snorting cocaine off their breasts.

August

Jennifer Aniston gets married without the press finding out by disguising her wedding to Justin Theroux as a birthday party. Walter Palmer, a big-game hunter and dentist from Minnesota, pays \$50,000 to shoot a Zimbabwean lion named Cecil with a crossbow. After the details of Cecil's end are made public, Palmer hires armed bodyguards and goes into hiding. An eagerly awaited production of *Hamlet* starring Benedict Cumberbatch opens to mixed reviews. German Chancellor Angela Merkel announces that all Syrian refugees will be eligible to claim asylum in Germany, triggering an influx of migrants. Kids Company,



the charity run by Camila Batmanghelidjh is closed down after going bankrupt. Noel Biderman, founder of the infidelity website Ashley Madison, steps down after the third mass leak of company data, some of which suggests that, despite previous denials, he has himself had several adulterous affairs.

September

The dark horse candidate of the Labour leadership

elections, Jeremy Corbyn, storms to victory with nearly 60% of the vote. Two of his rivals, Yvette Cooper and Liz Kendall, refuse to serve in his shadow cabinet. David Cameron announces that Corbyn's win makes the Labour Party "a threat to national security". Vladimir Putin says he is offering Syrian president Bashar al-Assad some "quite serious help" in the form of Russian bombers to deal with the regime's enemies. Iran offers Assad its own support in the form of ground troops led by its top general Qasem Soleimani. The body of a three-year-old Syrian boy, Aylan Kurdi, is washed up on a Turkish beach, provoking an outpouring of public sympathy for victims of the worsening refugee crisis, and demands for action. Britain offers to take in "thousands more" Syrian migrants. Queen Elizabeth II breaks Queen Victoria's record of 63 years, seven months and two days on the throne to become the longest-reigning British monarch. A 27-year-old human rights barrister, Charlotte Proudman, uses social media to publicly scold a 57-year-old solicitor, Alexander Carter-Silk: when contacting her on the professional networking site LinkedIn, he had described her profile picture as "stunning". David Cameron is forced to publicly deny claims made in a biography by Lord Ashcroft and journalist Isabel Oakeshott that he "inserted a private part of his anatomy" into the mouth of a pig during an initiation ceremony for the Piers Gaveston Society at Oxford.

October

The Labour MP Tom Watson is condemned for his role in hyping up spurious child abuse allegations relating

to senior Tory figures including Edward Heath and Leon Brittan. Some 14.5 million people watch as Nadiya Jamir Hussain, a 4ft 11in British Bangladeshi woman, wins *The Great British Bake Off*. The US



vice-president, Joe Biden, announces he won't run for office in 2016, giving Hillary Clinton's campaign a boost. To the fury of human rights campaigners, China's President Xi Jinping is granted the full red-carpet treatment during a four-day state visit to Britain.

November

The Islamic State murderer known as "Jihadi John", Mohammed Emwazi, is killed by a drone strike in Syria. The last British resident of Guantánamo Bay, Shaker Aamer, is released and flown home. General Sir Nicholas Houghton is accused of straying beyond his brief for saying that he would worry if Jeremy Corbyn became PM, because of his stance on Trident. Following weeks of rumours, actor Charlie Sheen reveals that he was diagnosed as HIV-positive four years ago. Aung San Suu Kyi's National League for Democracy wins a landslide victory in Burma's first openly contested national election in 25 years. Shadow



chancellor John McDonnell provokes widespread mockery by quoting from a copy of Chairman Mao's *Little Red Book* during his response to the Autumn Statement. He later defends the move, insisting that the stunt was a joke. Belgian jihadi Abdelhamid Abaaoud is killed during a clash with French police five days after allegedly masterminding the Paris terrorist attacks in which 129 people died. Mark Clarke, a leading figure in the Tory youth wing, is expelled from the party amid allegations of blackmail and bullying. Adele's new album, 25, shifts a record 3.38 million copies in its first week in the US.

December

Mark Zuckerberg celebrates the birth of his first child, a daughter called Max, by announcing that he and his



wife plan to give 99% of their Facebook shares, currently valued at \$45bn, to charity. Andy Murray delivers Britain's first Davis Cup victory since 1936. South Africa's top appeals court finds athlete Oscar Pistorius guilty of murdering his girlfriend, Reeva Steenkamp, overturning a previous conviction for culpable homicide. Marine Le Pen's National Front fails to win a significant breakthrough in France's regional elections, despite doing well in the first round of voting. Major Tim Peake blasts into the history books when he becomes the first British astronaut to go into space, to the sound of Queen's *Don't Stop Me Now*.

Lake District: The producers of the BBC's forthcoming remake of Arthur Ransome's *Swallows and Amazons* wanted it to be faithful to the novel – but they faced a dilemma when it came to the Walkers' youngest daughter. Could they really have a character called Titty? They decided not, and duly renamed her Tatty.



West Midlands: Delegates at the National Union of Students' Women's Conference in Solihull were asked to use "jazz hands" instead of clapping, because of reports that the sound of applause was "triggering anxiety" among some attendees. In a tweet, the union's Women's Campaign said whooping could also be "super inaccessible" – and urged delegates to "be mindful".



Oxfordshire: An old red telephone box that residents of Banbury use as an informal library was scheduled for demolition – because BT was concerned that the shelf installed to hold the books might fall down and hurt somebody. "We had a complaint about the wobbly shelving from a resident," a BT spokesman said. "Imagine if we had ignored it and little Janet or John had been injured."

Swansea: An ORG45M is acceptable on British roads, but not a VA61ANA, according to the DVLA's list of banned licence plates. The 46-page blacklist, made public in May, also includes such "potentially sensitive" plates as BL03 JOB, SLOSHED, PRO5 TAT and MO55 AD. Yet a PEN15 number plate went up for auction this year, having somehow slipped past the censors many years ago.

Cornwall: At Bodmin Town Council meetings, the biscuits were reportedly being handed around with blown-up photocopies of their packaging, so that attendees could check their ingredients before tucking in. New rules, to make life easier for allergy sufferers, also insisted that if necessary, the list of ingredients be translated into other languages and offered as a "talking book".

Yorkshire: Inspectors marked down a Yorkshire care home because staff addressed residents as "love", "darling" and the like. The Care Quality Commission described carers at the home in Harrogate as "very nice" – but said the terms of endearment could be regarded as "demeaning".

Lincolnshire: A man who went to a police station in Boston, Lincolnshire, to report a burglary was told to call 999 instead – and to use his own phone to do so. Peter Green told officers he thought the burglars were still in the house, but they said they couldn't help and wouldn't let him use their phone to ring the incident room. By the time officers arrived at the property 40 minutes later, the suspects had fled. "We shall review the matter to identify what we can learn from this to improve our service," said Lincolnshire Police.



Cambridgeshire: Punt chauffeurs in Cambridge were advised this year that they must deliver a safety briefing before every trip up the River Cam. Among other things, passengers should be told not to let their hands dangle in the water, and that amplified singing is banned.

Large illustrated "safety information" stickers in the punts will reinforce the message.

Norfolk: Student union officials in Norwich stopped undergraduates wearing sombreros at a freshers' fair because they deemed it offensive to Mexicans. University of East Anglia students were handed the straw hats by a Tex-Mex restaurant that was running a stall at the fair. But union representatives quickly confiscated the hats, saying that non-Mexicans wearing them were guilty of "cultural appropriation".



Hertfordshire: Britain's oldest pub was urged to change its name. Ye Olde Fighting Cocks, in St Albans, was founded in the eighth century, and has had its current name since 1872. But the animal rights group Peta said it should now be changed, to "reflect today's rejection of needless violence and help celebrate chickens as the intelligent, sensitive and social animals they are". Peta associate director Mimi Bekhechi suggested, as a more suitable alternative, Ye Olde Clever Cocks.

The way we live now: bondage gear at B&Q and bedrooms in broom cupboards

In February, staff at B&Q were advised to familiarise themselves with the bondage novel *Fifty Shades of Grey*, in preparation for a likely surge in demand for ropes, cable ties and tape following the release of the film version. "Understanding the storyline, and how some products that B&Q stock feature in the film, will better prepare staff for incoming queries," read an email sent to all branches.

For a grand Edwardian family, the Crawleys had remarkably little to do with God – but that was no oversight. Producers deliberately kept religion out of *Downton Abbey* to avoid alienating viewers, says Alastair Bruce, the

show's historical adviser. That's why, for instance, you never saw the family sitting down to dinner: they'd have had to be seen saying grace.

Around 800 ambulances in the UK have been equipped to deal with severely obese patients.

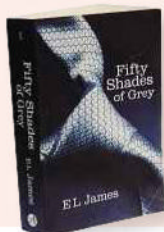
These "bariatric vehicles" have been designed or adapted, at a cost of up to £100,000 each, to deal with patients who weigh more than 50 stone.

A woman who answered an advert for a flat-share in Clapham, south London, found that the £500 a



month "room" she was being offered was a broom cupboard under the stairs. The space was just wide enough to contain a single mattress, and had some coat pegs on the wall for storage.

Leicestershire Police came up with a novel way to save money: only investigating burglaries at even-numbered properties. In a three-month trial, forensic teams were not sent to odd-numbered homes unless a suspect had been arrested or there was blood at the scene. The scheme was described as "ridiculous" by a local MP, but police said it had not dented their victim satisfaction rates.



NEW PEUGEOT 308 GTi

BY PEUGEOT SPORT

AWARD WINNING MEETS LEGENDARY



1.6L TURBOCHARGED
270 HP

0-62 MPH IN
6 SECONDS

TORSEN® LIMITED-SLIP
DIFFERENTIAL

PEUGEOT RECOMMENDS TOTAL

Official Fuel Consumption in MPG (l/100km) and CO₂ emissions (g/km) for the 308 GTi are: Urban 34.9 (8.1), Extra Urban 57.6 (4.9), Combined 47.1 (6.0) and CO₂ 139 (g/km). MPG figures are achieved under official EU test conditions, intended as a guide for comparative purposes only and may not reflect actual on-the-road driving conditions. Information correct at time of going to press. Visit Peugeot.co.uk for further information.

NEW PEUGEOT 308 GTi

MOTION & EMOTION



PEUGEOT



A laptop that erases borders, starting with the display.

It's the world's smallest 13-inch laptop, but that's only the beginning. With the Intel® Core™ processors, Windows 10, a virtually borderless InfinityEdge display with an UltraSharp™ Quad HD+ option, and amazing battery life, XPS 13 is designed to outperform the competition in every category.

Find out more about the new XPS 13 at Dell.co.uk/XPS13 or search for Dell XPS.



The new XPS 13.
Includes an Intel® Core™ processor

Intel Inside®.
Extraordinary
Performance
Outside.



The way we were in 2015

A look back over the year's opinion polls doesn't just tell how we like to vote... it shows us who we are

What kind of people are we?

We're a nation of TV watchers. The average Briton watches three hours and 40 minutes of television a day, and that doesn't include box sets (*Ofcom/Independent on Sunday*). We're more ethnically mixed than ever – almost one in three primary school children in England are from an ethnic minority; one in five speak English as a second language (*Department of Education*). We still believe in marriage, though far more so if we're rich than if we're poor: **90%** of mothers of young children in households with incomes above £45,000 are married; but only **25%** in households with incomes below £14,000 are wed (*Times*). Almost a fifth of us (**19%**) have a tattoo (*YouGov*). And a surprisingly large number – one in every 65 adults – are millionaires. There are now 715,000 millionaires in the UK, a rise of more than **40%** since 2010 (*Times*).

Do we have a sunny future outlook?

Less so as we get older. A mere **9%** of 14 to 16-year-olds agree with the statement "people like me don't stand a chance in life", but **21%** of those aged 20 to 22 agree with it (*Ipsos Mori for Barnados*). Labour voters are a bit more pessimistic than Conservative ones: **23%** expect there to be an apocalyptic disaster in their lifetime compared with **21%** of Tories; **31%** of UKIP voters expect one (*YouGov/Daily Mirror*). Men seem to have a greater lust for life than women: **35%** say they'd like to live forever, compared with just **21%** of women. However, **14%** of men also think they'll end up in hell (if it exists), while only **6%** of women do (*YouGov*).

Are we happy in our relationships?

Not all that happy when it comes to sex. Only **46%** of heterosexuals, and even fewer gay people (**38%**) say that they're satisfied with their sex lives. **43%** of couples with children admitted they hadn't had sex in the previous month (*YouGov*).

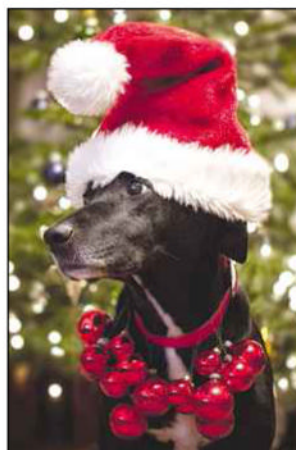


We don't pay Him much attention... but we adore him

Sunday Times). By contrast, **54%** of men in their 70s and 80s, and **31%** of women in that age group, describe themselves as being sexually active; though only **31%** of men that age and **20%** of women say they often kiss their partners (*English Longitudinal Study of Ageing/Telegraph*). On the other hand, fully **87%** of couples describe their relationship as good (*YouGov*). Some are not taking any chances, though. **11%** of men in long-term relationships, and **8%** of women, have a "running away" fund of, on average, £7,500 – a secret stash of cash to use if they leave their partner (*Money Advice Service/Daily Mail*).

Do men share the domestic burdens?

Some of them. **29%** of fathers say they take sole responsibility for the cooking, and **87%** say they do at least some of it. However, **60%** of mothers say they take sole responsibility for the grocery shopping (*BBC Good Food*). And **89%** of mothers in full-time work take on the main burden of parenting in their household: **88%** of them say they'd prefer to work less so they could see more of their children (*Mumsnet/Observer*). Many first-time fathers seem to find it hard to cope with parenthood: **38%** say they're concerned about their mental health (*NCT/The Guardian*). Only **35%** of women, and **27%** of men, see



themselves as feminists: yet **57%** and **48%**, respectively, agree there's still a need for feminism in Britain today (*YouGov*). Although half of British Muslims aged 55 or over agree that "a husband's job is to earn money, a wife's job is to look after the home and family", just **24%** of those aged 16 to 24 think so (*Demos/The Guardian*).

Are we an honest lot?

Not especially. **53%** of British women and **32%** of men say they have cheated on their partner with a friend (*YouGov/Sun*). **44%** of workers aged 20 to 39 (but only **12%** of those over 50) say they have lied about being sick in order to get a day off work. **29%** consider "sickies" to be additional holidays which they deserve (*RIAS/Daily Mail*). Qualified ambulance staff take the most sickies – 25 on average; nurses take 16.9 days; doctors just 4.4 (*Daily Telegraph*). **67%** of people who employ a cleaner keep it secret from their friends; **44%** of those who have a PA do the same; and **27%** hide having a gardener (*Fantastic Services/Daily Mail*).

To whom do we offer our devotion?

Not, by and large, to God. Only **38%** of British women and **24%** of men say they believe in Him – even though **61%** of women and **35%** of men believe in an afterlife (*BCS70/Daily Telegraph*). Nor are we that devoted to Queen and country: only **27%** of British adults say they'd fight for their nation (**44%** of Americans would) (*Gallup/Times*). However, a remarkable number of married men are devoted to their mother-in-law: **25%** admit having a "genuine crush" on her – **31%** think she's secretly attracted to them (*Peter Hahn/Daily Mirror*). And of course, being British, we're devoted to our pets: **56%** of dog owners would mourn the death of their pooch more than that of an extended family member, and **85%** consider their dog to be a member of the family (*Samsung/Daily Mail*).

Statistics of the year

The name Gary is on its way out. In 2013, just 28 British babies were named Gary, less than the number (37) named Loki, after the Norse god of mischief.

The Daily Telegraph

The average pensioner now has a higher weekly income (£394) than the average person of working age (£385).

The Times

One in four front gardens in Britain has been paved over.

BBC News online

Britain's public sector workforce has fallen by 960,000 since 2010, while the private sector has created 2.7 million jobs.

Office for National Statistics

One in four British adults aged under 25 are teetotal.

The Daily Telegraph

Just 13% of the white children in the poorest social class in Britain

get a degree, compared with 53% of British Indians in that class, and 30% of Caribbeans.

Institute for Fiscal Studies

Russell Brand has nine million Twitter followers – three times as many as every British MP combined.

The Sunday Times

It takes between 60 and 80 intelligence agents to monitor a single terrorist suspect around the clock.

The Economist

20% of all the trees in Britain are ash trees – and ash dieback disease is expected to kill 90% of them within the next 20 years.

The Observer

The number of babies born to teenagers in England and Wales has fallen to its lowest level since 1946.

ONS/The Guardian

China used more cement between 2011 and 2013 than the US did in the entire 20th century.

The Washington Post



IT'S NOW

OR NEVER

GATWICK

LEGAL

Complies with EU air quality laws.

AFFORDABLE

£7.8bn cost all privately funded.

FORWARD LOOKING

Competition with more choice and lower fares.

POSSIBLE

A new solution that can actually be delivered.

BRITAIN WINS

HEATHROW

ILLEGAL

Breaches EU air quality laws.

UNAFFORDABLE

£18.6bn cost plus at least £5bn from taxpayers.

BACKWARD LOOKING

Monopoly with less choice and higher fares.

IMPOSSIBLE

Expansion that has failed time and again.

BRITAIN LOSES

THE UK NEEDS A NEW RUNWAY – ONLY GATWICK CAN DELIVER.

LONDON *Gatwick*
OBVIOUSLY.

Get the facts about the runway debate at
gatwickobviously.com and @LGWobviously

It must be true... the best tabloid stories of 2015

With his brooding gaze, strong features and hairy chest, Shabani is certainly manly. He is also a gorilla, but that didn't stop him becoming a heart-throb in Japan. Visitors to Higashiyama Zoo began commenting on his "handsome" looks in March. After that, hundreds of photos of him striking poses began circulating online – but as his fans noted, he also has a sensitive side. When not flexing his muscles, he tends to his two mates and four children.



A man spotted wandering around a shop in Florida, wearing a T-shirt emblazoned with the words "WHO NEEDS DRUGS? No, seriously, I Have Drugs," was arrested – and charged with drug possession. John Balmer, 50, was detained in a branch of Kmart after being spotted handing a small plastic bag to another customer in a checkout queue. It was found to contain crystal meth and cannabis.

A snowy owl in Poland killed her mate and ate him, apparently because she was disgusted by the inadequacy of his penis. Staff at the animal shelter introduced the male into her enclosure because she seemed to be craving company. But two days later, they found it lying dead and half-devoured on the ground. A vet examined the body, and noticed the

male's genitalia were under-developed. "In other words, he wasn't a suitable lover, and we assume that after failing to perform, she killed him."

Two American tourists had to abandon their rental car after following their satnav straight onto a deserted beach in Wales. The Texans had set the GPS device to take them to Caldey Island, off the coast of Pembrokeshire. But it failed to warn them that you have to board a car ferry to get there, and instead led them down a slipway and onto the beach at Tenby. They dutifully followed the instructions until their car ground to a halt in wet sand.

An Irish man who claimed to have been attacked outside a pub was arrested after CCTV footage emerged of him throwing a brick at a car window – and the brick bouncing back and knocking him unconscious. "You should have heard the Garda laughing when they saw the video," said the pub's landlord.

A woman who was about to embark on an arranged marriage in India ditched her fiancé on their wedding day, after he failed a maths test. Lovely Singh apparently told her would-be groom, Ram Baran, that before they tied the knot, she'd like him to answer a simple question: what, she asked, is 15 + 6? When he answered 17, she called the whole thing off, saying the man was a fool.

Peruvian men were tricked into wolf-whistling at their own mothers earlier this year, to teach them a lesson. Campaigners first identified two men with a history of

harassing women in the street, and then persuaded their mothers to dress up in wigs and short skirts, and saunter past them. "Tasty panties," yelled one – before recoiling in shock when his mother whipped off her disguise, and began screaming at him.

A pet owner from Norfolk spent £300 having his goldfish cured of constipation. The unnamed man took the two-year-old fish to his local vet in North Walsham when it seemed to be ailing. Vet Faye Bethell worked out that it had a blockage in its bottom, and warned him that without surgery, the fish would die. At first, the fish's owner balked at the cost of the operation, but ten minutes later he changed his mind, and the hour-long procedure went ahead.

Childhood sweethearts Joel Burger and Ashley King announced their engagement in April, paving the way for the first Burger-King wedding. The couple posed in front of a Burger King restaurant – and the chain promised to pay for them to have a "whopper" of a wedding. This went ahead in July: the groom and his ushers wore Burger King T-shirts and hamburger socks; and there were Burger King crowns for all the guests.

An American man was arrested after dragging his computer into an alleyway, and shooting it dead. Lucas Hinch shot the Dell PC eight times. He told police he had been having trouble with it for eight months when he finally snapped. "It was glorious," he said, of the moment he pulled

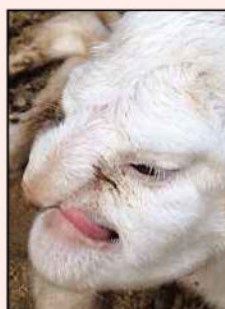
A British designer spent three days this summer living as a goat – to give himself a break "from the pain of being a self-conscious being, able to regret the past and worry about the future". Thomas Thwaites strapped on special prosthetic limbs for his "holiday from being human", so that he could move around on all fours with a herd of goats in the Swiss Alps.



the trigger. A police report of the incident in Colorado Springs described him as having "killed" the computer, but he was only charged with illegally discharging a weapon within city limits.

A boy-band singer collapsed with heat exhaustion on an easyjet flight after donning 12 layers of clothes to avoid a baggage fee. James McElvar, of the Scottish band Rewind, was told he'd have to pay £45 for his bag on the London to Glasgow flight. So rather than check it in, he unpacked it, and put on its contents: six T-shirts, four sweaters, three pairs of jeans, two pairs of sweatpants, two jackets and two hats. Once on board, he began to disrobe – but too late: already soaked with sweat, he was sick and had to be given oxygen.

A lamb with the features of an angry old man caused a sensation in Russia earlier this year. Sheep farmer Blasius Lavrentiev, 45, said he "nearly died of shock" when he went to check on the lambs produced by his prize ewe, and saw the "hairy face of an old man" looking up at him. Neighbours were similarly appalled, and complained that the lamb was scaring their children. But the story had a happy ending when a local circus offered to



buy the lamb – and for ten times more than it would have fetched at the slaughterhouse.



Millions of animal selfies have done the rounds online – but few species have embraced the trend with the enthusiasm of a rare marsupial named the quokka. Visitors to Australia's Rottneest Island, where the friendly, cat-sized creatures mainly live, have found they love posing for the camera, and will smile for it too.

Pick of the week's correspondence

Prince and the papers

To The Guardian

Confirmation in the Cabinet Office "precedent book" that Prince Charles has had access to cabinet papers for decades will come as no surprise to historians. The clue's in the name. The issue has a far longer history, but we know from an earlier precedent book – declassified in 2006 – that, as first in line to the throne, Charles's mother began receiving cabinet minutes and memoranda in June 1950. Given that our constitutional monarchy is largely constructed around precedent, it would have been more surprising to learn that Charles hadn't enjoyed similar access. And his supporters will claim that this follows naturally from his future role as monarch.

Nevertheless, as citizens, we surely have the right to be "educated" in how constitutional monarchy operates, and to have some means of knowing whether the heir is behaving in ways that might undermine trust in his neutrality. The most disturbing aspect of this story is the Cabinet Office's battle to prevent the release of material that might serve such an "educational" purpose.

Prof Philip Murphy, Institute of Commonwealth Studies

A cold-caller's Christmas

To The Independent

I used to be a cold-caller, and occasionally turned tricks. I want to wish a Happy Holiday to people who do rotten jobs for little pay because they have no choice. I also want to thank those members of the public who simply ended my calls firmly, quickly and without abusing me or amusing themselves at my expense, as well as the johns who did not assault me. Happy Christmas to homeless beggars, street hustlers and all *les marginaux*. Remember, there are a lot of people who do actually understand Christmas.

Sean Nee, Edinburgh

Under the flight path

To The Daily Telegraph

Duncan Rayner refers to the noise from the Heathrow flight path at his home near Windsor and at the home of a relative in Chiswick. Yet these areas are

One good reason for voting "In"

To The Independent

My dad reaches 95 at the end of this week. He lives at home with my mum, 89, in David Cameron's constituency. He fought in the War, was mentioned in dispatches for gallantry and worked as a modestly paid builder until retirement.

My dad has retained his full mental faculties but struggles to walk and remains always at risk of falling. His life is supremely enhanced by the twice daily visits of a carer who helps him to shower and dress in the morning and gets him ready for bed in the evening. His carer is a Romanian migrant who delivers a very high standard of care, with great empathy and kindness, in faultless English, of course. Without such care, my dad couldn't live in his home of 60 years.

Britain is a better place because his carer lives and works here. My dad, a lifelong Conservative voter, certainly thinks so. I have no idea if his carer receives benefits in support of his wage: I suspect he does given the monetary value we place on his role as a society, but can somebody tell me who is going to look after my dad if his carer is not able to live and work here anymore? I need no other reason to vote In.

Gary Howse, Stockport, Cheshire

not known for low property prices or burgeoning crime from disaffected youth, unable to tolerate the dreadful living conditions. Rather, the residents seem to get used to the noise, and don't worry too much about the risk of a crash.

Maybe those in favour of expansion at Heathrow have factored into their calculations this apparent contradiction between words and actions.

Dr Ken Pollock, Cheltenham, Gloucestershire

Limit immigrant benefits

To The Guardian

David Cameron's negotiations on limiting in-work benefits for EU immigrants appear to have won little support. One simple idea might be to limit levels of benefit to those payable in the country of origin of the European migrant. That would deter those seeking to exploit the system and could disarm politicians in other member states, who would no longer be able to say that their emigrants were monetarily disadvantaged. It would also leave the fundamental right of freedom of movement untouched.

Ken Daly, Aisholt, Somerset

Too much tax code

To The Daily Telegraph

The Government talks about simplifying the tax system, yet makes no move to do so. Like all administrations, it is happiest when making things more complicated. In 2010,

George Osborne stated in his speech to the Confederation of British Industry that "since 1997 the tax legislation handbook has more than doubled in length – it is now over 11,000 pages long". Come 2014, the handbook was around 18,000 pages long. Heaven only knows what the number is now. The Office of Tax Simplification was set up in 2010. May I ask what it has been doing since?

D.W. Parkinson, Fulwood, Lancashire

Right-wing bias

To The Guardian

When a left-wing grassroots movement (Momentum) seeks to influence Labour Party policy and hold its MPs to account, it's called entryism. When a right-wing faction of Labour MPs largely funded by Lord Sainsbury seeks to influence policy and puts pressure on local parties to select its preferred candidates for vacant parliamentary seats, it's called Progress.

Dr David Kiernan, Barnsley

Sneaky decisions

To The Independent

The decision by the Commons to allow fracking under national parks is but one example of the growing trend of using secondary legislation to drive through important policies. In this instance, ministers have been able to abandon the outright ban they

promised in January, without effective challenge from MPs. While parliamentary debates on bills can prove challenging, the prize of better, more robust legislation is surely worth it. Sneaking things through the legislative back door does the Government no credit. The procedure should be reserved for matters of detailed implementation.

Ruth Chambers, London

Bird strikes are no risk

To The Daily Telegraph

Please, let us have no more dire prophecies about the risk of a bird strike from the proposed estuary airport. JFK airport in New York is located amid the Jamaica Bay Wildlife Refuge and scarcely has any problems. LaGuardia Airport has no wildlife refuge – yet in 2009 the pilot Chesley Sullenberger still had to ditch in the Hudson after a bird strike.

Geoff Snape, Blackburn, Lancashire

The Force of secrecy

To The Daily Telegraph

How has Hollywood managed to keep the story of the new Star Wars film a closely guarded secret when it seems impossible for the Government to maintain even a semblance of discretion on policy issues for more than five minutes?

A cast of thousands; millions of pounds invested; hundreds of specialist subcontractors and project freelancers; three years of filming – and still the Hollywood omertà is inviolate.

Those in the Palace of Westminster could learn from George Lucas.

Ian R Williams, Nutley, Hampshire



© MATT/THE DAILY TELEGRAPH



Model shown is the Cayenne Diesel at £54,929.00 (RRP) including 21" Cayenne SportEdition wheels with wheelarch extensions, metallic paint and roof rails in aluminium including roof transport system.

The family sports car from a family of sports cars.

When all you build is sports cars, what happens when you build an SUV?

You create another sports car, naturally. One that's always at home; on the circuit, on the road and off the beaten track. A car for every day that's far from everyday.

The Cayenne range, from £50,441.00 (RRP) to the limits you set.

Discover more at porsche.co.uk/cayenne.



PORSCHE

Official fuel economy figures for the Cayenne Diesel in mpg (l/100km): urban 36.2-37.2 (7.8 – 7.6), extra urban 45.5 – 47.1 (6.2 – 6.0), combined 41.5 – 42.8 (6.8 – 6.6). CO₂ emissions: 179 – 173 g/km. The mpg and CO₂ figures quoted are sourced from official EU-regulated tests, are provided for comparability purposes and may not reflect your actual driving experience.

Some of the things they said were good for us...

What the scientists said in 2015

● **Porridge** could be the key to a long life, we learnt in January. A small bowl (or 28g of oats) a day appears to reduce the risk of dying prematurely by 5%, and of dying from a heart attack by 9%. For a Harvard University study into the impact of whole grains on longevity, researchers tracked 100,000 apparently healthy people for 15 years, during which time 26,000 of them died. Even after factors such as body mass index and exercise levels had been accounted for, those who had regularly eaten whole grains lived longer. Of course, it doesn't have to be porridge: a bowl of brown rice a day would do the same job.

● **Eggs** are full of amino acids and provide us with every vitamin we need except C. So far, so good. But they also have another benefit: they turn us into nicer people. In February, a study found that people who ate the equivalent of a triple-egg omelette in the morning were much more likely to give money to charity. The researchers, from the Netherlands, suggested that the effect is due to one of the amino acids found in eggs: tryptophan, or Trp, plays a key role in the production of serotonin, the chemical that is believed to regulate people's "mood". Sixteen people were given three-eggs-worth of Trp and 16 others a placebo powder. All the participants were then paid a €10 fee and asked if they'd like to donate some of it to charity. Those who had taken the Trp proved far more generous, giving a whole euro, on average, whereas the others gave just 50 cents.

● **Breastfeeding** had a boost in March, when a study found that babies who were breastfed for a year had, by the age of 30, higher IQ levels than those who were formula-fed. They were more successful, too. A Brazilian team monitored 3,500 babies born in Pelotas, Brazil, in 1982 and found that regardless of social class, by the age of 30 the breastfed babies had IQs four points higher, had spent longer in school and were earning a third more than those who'd been nursed for less than a month. However, a British study, published in October, appeared to muddy the waters. Based on analysis of 11,000 British children, it concluded



Staring at fish can reduce blood pressure

that breastfeeding had no impact on a two-year-old's IQ; nor did it seem to be linked to intelligence levels in later life.

● **Gout** is agonisingly painful, but for sufferers, there may be a silver lining. In March, a study published in the BMJ reported that people with gout are 24% less likely to suffer from Alzheimer's than their peers. It's thought that the build up of uric acid that causes gout – and increases the risk of kidney and heart problems – may have a useful neuroprotective effect.

● **Anglo-Saxon potions** aren't an obvious solution to modern medical crises, but, in April, a ninth century "eye salve" made from garlic, onions, wine and the bile from a cow's stomach was found to almost completely wipe out the antibiotic-resistant "superbug" MRSA. The medieval remedy was recreated by scientists at the University of Nottingham from instructions in *Bald's Leechbook*, a leather-bound manuscript written in Old English. After applying the salve to infections, they were amazed to find that it wiped out 90% of the bacteria.

● **Staring**, whether into our dogs' eyes or at fish swimming around in a tank, is good for us. In April, researchers at Japan's Azabu University, found that making eye contact with a pet dog for 30 minutes was found to boost oxytocin, the "love hormone". And later in the summer, a study by the National Marine Aquarium, Plymouth University and the University of Exeter concluded that watching fish swim around a tank can lower blood pressure by 4% and reduce the heart rate by 7%.

● **Dogs** are not just good companions; they may also protect children from developing asthma. A study of more than a million children in Sweden found that those who'd grown up with a dog in the house during their first year were 15% less likely to have developed asthma by school age than their non-dog-owning contemporaries; exposure to farm animals appeared to be even more effective. Children whose parents worked with livestock had a 52% reduced risk.

From "imaginary" meals to water on Mars...

Meal in a pill

A tablet designed to tackle obesity, described as an "imaginary meal", could trick the body into believing it has just eaten. Fexaramine, expected to hit the market in five to ten years, triggers the release of digestion acids, alters blood-sugar levels and switches on the fat-burning process, without the body consuming a single calorie. It has already worked on obese mice and is now being tested on humans.

Water on Mars

Nasa was "tremendously excited" this year to reveal the evidence of running rivers and streams on Mars, because it

makes a manned mission to the Red Planet more feasible. When images of dark streaks running down sun-facing mountain slopes were seen in 2011, the search for water began in earnest. Nasa has now shown that these streaks contain hydrated salts. The next step is to find out where the water is coming from. It could be that underground rocks hold ice that melts in the summer. Another theory is that surface salts absorb water from the atmosphere until there's enough to run downhill.



Of wolves and men

It was early man's ability to make friends with wolves that helped us outsmart the Neanderthals, and beat them in the competition for food, according to an anthropologist at Penn State University. Pat Shipman's theory is that once we began taming wolves and using them as hunting partners – letting them do the chasing, before moving in for the kill and sharing the meat – we became unbeatable adversaries.

Mighty limpets

The strongest biological material

known to man, researchers have found, is in the tiny teeth of the limpet. Experiments on limpets' tongues, which bristle with teeth made of goethite, found them to be tougher than spider silk – the previous record holder – and all manmade materials, including Kevlar, the fibres of which are used to make bulletproof vests. The teeth have an average strength of 4.9 gigapascals – equivalent to a strand of spaghetti being able to hold up 3,000 bags of sugar.

Tough guys prefer chilli

Men who like spicy food have higher testosterone levels. In a study at the University of Grenoble, 114 men aged 18 to

...and some things we were advised to avoid

What the scientists said in 2015

● **iPads**, or at least taking them to bed, isn't just unromantic; it may cause sleep problems. In January, researchers from Harvard Medical School published a study showing that people who read off a backlit device in the evenings take longer to fall asleep than those who read from a printed page. They also spend less time in REM sleep and are groggier in the mornings. It's thought that short-wave enriched "blue light" emitted by such devices suppresses (even more than other kinds of light) the production of melatonin, the hormone that controls the body's day/night patterns.

● **Gifts from the office** might seem a great perk. But psychologists warned in January that they should be accepted with caution. A team at the University of Surrey analysed the experiences of 50,000 employees, and found that those who were issued with laptops or phones ended up feeling stressed by them. They felt that they were now under an obligation to respond to business-related phone calls and emails during their own time, and their relationships and even their health suffered as a consequence.

● **Over-exercising** could be just as ill-advised as not exercising at all, researchers said in February. After studying 1,500 people over a 12-year period, Danish scientists found that fitness fanatics – defined as those who routinely jogged at a brisk pace (seven minutes a mile or faster) for four hours or more per week – were just as likely to die as those who did no exercise at all. The slothful needn't celebrate too soon, however: the study also confirmed that runners who were moderate in their habits – running a 12-minute mile for around two hours a week – had significantly lower mortality rates than the non-exercisers.

● **Lie-ins** were given a thumbs down in March, when research suggested that people who sleep more than eight hours a night have an increased risk of suffering a stroke. Researchers at Cambridge University monitored 10,000 people, with an average age of 62, over a decade, during which time 346 suffered strokes.



Barbie: a negative, poisonous role model

Those who habitually slept more than eight hours were 46% more likely to have strokes than those who slept six to eight hours. But most at risk were those who had increased the amount they slept from six to eight hours, suggesting a sudden need to sleep more could be a warning sign.

● **Barbie** is often accused of presenting a negative role model for young girls. In April, she was also accused of being poisonous. Researchers from Iowa warned that plastic dolls made in the 1970s and 1980s should be binned, as they can release dangerous toxins as they degrade. The team, at St Ambrose University in Iowa, tested 100 toys in April, including Barbie dolls, Fisher Price figurines and My Little Ponies. They concluded that one in four contained more than ten times the current safety limits for lead; a third of the non-vinyl (painted) toys had more lead and cadmium than is now considered safe; and a fifth contained arsenic. Yellow toys are apparently the ones to bin first.

● **Being indoors** for too much of the day could be the cause of the rising levels of myopia (short-sightedness) being found in children over the world, researchers said in May. In China and South Korea, 80% to 90% of young adults are now short-sighted, up from less than 20% 50 years ago. In Europe and the US the figure is closer to 50% but it has doubled since the 1950s. Levels have tended to rise broadly in line with the introduction of compulsory schooling. As a result, it was widely agreed that "close work" was to blame. But now, there is growing evidence it's actually children being deprived of daylight, during their long hours in the classroom, that's behind the "epidemic".

● **Bacon** and other processed meats were classified as "Group 1" carcinogens in October, after the WHO reviewed 800 studies on the link between processed meats and cancer. It concluded that red meat, too, is "probably carcinogenic" to humans, and estimated that eating 50g of processed meat a day increased the risk of colorectal cancer by 18%. But it stressed that meat also has health benefits, and Cancer Research UK suggested cutting down on red and processed meats, rather than giving them up.

...a selection of scientific theories and discoveries from 2015

44 had their saliva tested for testosterone before being given plates of mashed potato and asked to add chilli sauce to taste. Those who added the most sauce had the highest levels of the hormone, which is associated with thrill-seeking, social dominance and a higher sex drive.

1610: the age of man

To future historians, the year 1610 may be known as the beginning of the "human epoch": the moment when man began to dominate the planet, making irreversible changes to its geology. The date for such a moment of crisis has been hotly debated but, in March, two scientists

claimed that 1610 should be considered the turning point as it was then that the transfer of crops and species between the Old and New World began to have a lasting impact. The arrival of Europeans in America was as "Earth-changing" as a meteorite strike, said Dr Simon Lewis and Professor Mark Maslin of University College London.

Hot dinners for chimps

It turns out that chimps are like humans in yet another way: they prefer their food hot and



will even defer gratification while they wait for it to cook. When a team from Harvard University gave the apes a choice of raw or roasted sweet potatoes, 90% of the time they chose the roasted veg. Even when they had to wait for 60 seconds while the potato was "cooked" in a fake oven with a false bottom, the chimps preferred to hold out for the hot food in roughly the same numbers. In a final experiment, half the chimps opted to store the raw food, on the expectation of being able to cook it later.

Falling to Australia

Suppose you dug a "gravity tunnel" through the Earth and jumped in, how long would it take you to fall from one side of the planet to the other? It was long thought the answer to this question – often put to physics students – was 42 minutes. But a Canadian student from McGill University proved in March that the journey is four minutes shorter, noting that the density of the planet is not constant – it affects the gravitational pull on the body differently as it falls. On its way to Sydney, the body would accelerate to 18,000mph and pass through areas where the temperature reached 7,000°C.

Test your grasp of current affairs and general knowledge with our quiz.
(The answers are on the opposite page)

Looking back on 2015

- 1 This year, Harper Lee finally published a second book, a sequel to *To Kill a Mockingbird*. Name the small town that provides the setting for both books, and Lee's hometown, on which it is based.
- 2 Who made headlines for allegedly referring to an easyJet pilot as a "basic bitch" as she was escorted off a plane at Luton Airport?
- 3 "Their Royal Heilnesses" screamed a front-page Sun headline in July. To what was it referring?
- 4 "They're cheating dirtbags and they deserve no such discretion," said a group calling itself The Impact Team. What had the group just done?
- 5 "At my age I'm not likely to be a long-term contender, am I?" was which politician's assessment of his future?
- 6 Which small business – seen as a symbol of the hipster invasion of east London – was attacked by a mob in September?
- 7 The head of a Crimean winery was threatened with an embezzlement charge after she let two visiting VIPs drink a bottle of 240-year-old wine worth £58,000. Who were her lucky guests?
- 8 "She's really something. What a beauty, that one. If I weren't happily married..." Who was Donald Trump talking about?
- 9 Dorret Conway was eliminated from *The Great British Bake Off* after a disastrous performance in "bread week". Which famous artwork had she attempted to recreate?
- 10 Which temporary "bemusement park" was dismantled at the end of September and its fixtures sent to the "jungle" refugee camp in Calais?
- 11 Anticipated since 1985, 21 October 2015 was marked by film fans around the world. What is the significance of the date?
- 12 Hungary's PM was one of the most trenchant critics of Chancellor Merkel's "open-door" asylum policy this year. Name him, and his party.



- and the shadow home secretary?
- 2 Which East End street was the scene, in 1911, of the Battle of Stepney, a gunfight between police, Scots Guards and a gang of anarchists?
 - 3 For which Democrat presidential contender did Lauren Bacall and Humphrey Bogart campaign in 1952?
 - 4 Which British king was the most recently buried?
 - 5 Which US president supposedly spread a rumour about his opponent having sex with a pig, purely to "force the son of a bitch to deny it"?
 - 6 In what year did the Berlin Wall go up – and when was it torn down?
 - 7 Which tenth century Frenchman is the patron saint of the Alps, skiing, hiking and mountaineering?
 - 8 Which Italian city was Austrian until 1866?
 - 9 With which countries would you associate **a)** The Sandinistas **b)** Shining Path **c)** the Zapatistas?
 - 10 Name the Labour minister for health who spearheaded the foundation of the National Health Service, and the Labour politician who served as minister of labour during WWII.
 - 11 Who famously sailed in **a)** HMS Bounty **b)** HMS Endeavour **c)** Endurance **d)** Kon-Tiki?
 - 12 "Four score and seven years ago our fathers brought forth on this continent a new nation, conceived in liberty, and dedicated to the proposition that all men are created equal." Who said this, where and in what year?
 - 13 Who was the first monarch to rule over the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Ireland?
 - 14 What happened to the balls at Wimbledon in 1986?

Places

- 1 Which eight countries border Austria?
- 2 On the London Underground, the name of only one station contains only a single vowel. Which is it?
- 3 Which is the world's longest continental mountain range?
- 4 Big Ben is the name of the bell. What is the name of the tower?

- 5 In which cities would you find the following airports **a)** George Best **b)** Marco Polo **c)** John Paul II **d)** Cristoforo Colombo?
- 6 Where would you find the following streets **a)** Nevsky Prospect **b)** the Graben **c)** Sauchiehall Street **d)** The Via Dolorosa?
- 7 Which city's skyline is shown in the photograph at the bottom of this page?
- 8 The name of which Italian region means "at the foot of a mountain"?
- 9 Which county is known as the "Garden of England"?
- 10 Which US states are known as **a)** the Garden State **b)** The Golden State **c)** The Land of the Midnight Sun?
- 11 Who named Botany Bay after landing there in 1770, and why did he call it that?

Music

- 1 In which musicals would you find the following foods **a)** the worst pies in London **b)** crisp apple strudels **c)** lollies in a lolly pop jar... sugar plum, cinnamon and lemon tart **d)** hot sausage and mustard **e)** parsley, peppers, cabbages and celery, asparagus and watercress and fiddleferns and lettuce **f)** lemon drops (high above the chimney pots)?
- 2 With which former member of Roxy Music did David Bowie write his 1977 song *Heroes*?
- 3 Which musicians introduced us to **a)** a handsome Dan, a good-lookin' Joe and a sweet-talking Romeo **b)** the sad-eyed lady of the lowlands **c)** runaround Sue **d)** my sweet Lady Jane **e)** two-ton Ted from Teddington **f)** Dirty Diana?
- 4 Which Christian name links a Puccini opera, an American poet, an English king and, in a Disney animated film, a cat-stealing butler (pictured)?
- 5 Which composer incorporated a row of teacups hanging on a string into his one-act opera, *Noye's Fludde*?
- 6 The works of which composer are collected in the Köchel catalogue?
- 7 Which Wagner opera is loosely based on a 13th century epic poem?
- 8 Which song, released this year, opens: "I've been here before/But always hit the floor/I've spent a lifetime running"?
- 9 Which American singer provided the vocals for Mark Ronson's 2015 mega-hit *Uptown Funk*?



When they were young...



The five people pictured above were all in the news this year. Who are they?

- 10** *The Slave of Duty* is the subtitle of which Gilbert & Sullivan operetta?
11 In what year did The Beatles break up?
12 Which two rock stars were members of the Jeff Beck Group and the Faces, before finding greater success elsewhere – one with a band, the other as a solo artist?

Art and literature

- 1** Which of Shakespeare's kings said
a) Uneasy lies the head that wears the crown **b)** There is no creature loves me, and if I die no soul will pity me **c)** I will do such things, what they are yet I know not, but they shall be the terrors of the Earth
d) I wasted time, and now doth time waste me **e)** Now my soul hath elbow-room?
2 Which US playwright wrote *Our Town*?
3 The Depression-era novel (and later film) *They Shoot Horses, Don't They?* is set at what kind of contest?
4 Who won this year's Man Booker Prize?
5 Name **a)** Peter Rabbit's sisters **b)** The Two Bad Mice **c)** Tabitha Twitchit's son.
6 How was the painter Doménikos Theotokópoulos better known? Which 20th century American artist was born Emmanuel Radnitzky?
7 Lucky, Cadpig, Roly-Poly and Patch all feature in which book? For a bonus point, name their parents.
8 In Herman Melville's *Moby Dick*, what is the name of Captain Ahab's whaling ship? And who is the book's narrator?
9 Which poet wrote of women who "come and go, talking of Michelangelo", and also "gathering fuel in vacant lots"?
10 In which London museum would you find Poussin's *A Dance to the Music of Time*?



Obituaries

- 1** Which former cloakroom attendant had a hit with *Anyone Who Had a Heart*?
2 The work of which neurologist formed the basis of the film *Awakenings*?
3 Which novelist was accused by Barbara Cartland of being "responsible for all the pervers in England"?
4 Who railed against the "Serota tendency" in British art, and described himself as being cursed with the "voice of an Edwardian lesbian"?
5 Between his 350 or so film roles, which aristocratic actor found time to release a couple of heavy-metal albums?
6 "You don't kvetch... It was the part of a lifetime." Which actor, chiefly known for one outstanding performance, said this?
7 "There won't be a single person feeling anything but sadness and loss... and there are few political passings of which that can truthfully be said." To whose death was Martin Kettle referring in The Guardian?
8 Into which water feature did a former Miss Sweden wade, and so become world famous?

- 9** Which singer, who sold 60 million records, was one of the 139 passengers on a TWA flight that was hijacked by Hezbollah militants in 1985?
10 Who described the Alzheimer's that eventually killed him as "an embuggerance"?

At the movies

- 1** In which Hanna-Barbera cartoons would you find **a)** Barney Rubble **b)** Penrod Pooch **c)** Penelope Pitstop?
2 Accepting his Best Actor Oscar for *My Fair Lady*, Rex Harrison dedicated it to "My two fair ladies." To whom was he referring?
3 Which 2015 film featured characters called Bing Bong, Forgetter Bobby, Imaginary Boyfriend and Subconscious

Guard Dave?

- 4** Which 1980s cult comedy is going to be remade next year with an all-female cast, led by Kristen Wiig and Melissa McCarthy?
5 The song *Have Yourself a Merry Little Christmas* comes from which 1944 film?
6 To what films are these the last lines:
a) "Roads? Where we're going we don't need roads." **b)** "Hang on a minute lads, I've got a great idea." **c)** "I do wish we could chat longer, but I'm having an old friend for dinner. Bye." **d)** "Well, nobody's perfect" **e)** "And like that... he's gone!"

Looking back on 2015 1 Maycomb; Monroeville 2 Kate Moss 3 Home video footage from 1933, showing Princess Elizabeth and Margaret and their uncle, the future Edward VIII, giving mock Nazi salutes 4 They'd hacked into the Ashley Madison adultery website and were threatening to reveal the names of its users 5 Jeremy Corbyn 6 Café 7 Vladimir Putin and Silvio Berlusconi 8 His daughter, Ivanka Trump 9 Tracey Emin's *My Bed* 10 Banksy's *DisemPOWERED* 11 It was back to the future day – the date Marty goes forward to at the end of the film 12 Viktor Orban, Fidesz **History and politics** 1 Hilary Benn and Andy Burnham 2 Sidney Street 3 Adlai Stevenson 4 Richard III (before that, it was Edward VIII) 5 Lyndon B. Johnson 6 1961 and 1969 7 Bernard of Menthon 8 Venice 9 a) Nicaragua b) Peru c) Mexico 10 Anwerth (Nye) Bevan, Ernest Bevin 11 a) Fletcher Christian/Captain Bligh b) James Cook c) Ernest Shackleton d) Thor Heyerdahl 12 Abraham Lincoln, Gettysburg, in 1863 13 George III 14 For the first time yellow balls were used during the tournament **Places** 1 Switzerland, Liechtenstein, Italy, Germany, the Czech Republic, Slovakia, Hungary and Slovenia 2 Bank 3 The Andes 4 The Elizabeth Tower 5 a) Belfast b) Venice c) Krakow d) Genoa e) Saint Petersburg b) Vienna c) Glasgow d) Jerusalem 7 Tokyo 8 Piedmont 9 Kent 10 a) New Jersey b) California c) Alaska 11 James Cook, because of the abundance of flora and fauna **Music** 1 a) Sweeney Todd b) The Sound of Music c) Chitty Chitty Bang Bang d) Oliver e) Into the Woods f) The Wizard of Oz 2 Brian Eno 3 a) Bruce Springsteen b) Bob Dylan c) Dion DiMucci d) The Rolling Stones e) Benny Hill f) Michael Jackson 4 Edgar 5 Benjamin Britten 6 Mozart 7 Parsifal 8 *Writing on the Wall* by Sam Smith 9 Bruno Mars 10 *The Fires of Panzance* 11 1970 12 Ronnie Wood and Rod Stewart **Art and literature** 1 a) Henry IV b) Richard III c) Lear d) Richard II e) John 2 Thornton Wilder 3 a dance marathon 4 Marlon James 5 a) Flopsy, Mopsy and Cottontail b) Tom Thumba and Hunca Munca c) Tom Kitten 6 El Greco, Man Ray 7 101 Dalmatians, Pongo and Miss 8 Peguon, Ishmael 9 T.S. Eliot 10 The Wallace Collection **Obituaries** 1 Cilla Black 2 Oliver Sacks 3 Jackie Collins 4 Brian Sewell 5 Sir Christopher Lee 6 Ron Moody 7 Charles Kennedy 8 Anita Ekberg waded into the Trevi Fountain in *La Dolce Vita* 9 Dennis Rousso 10 Terry Pratchett **At the movies** 1 a) The Flintstones b) Hong Kong Phooey c) *Wacky Races* 2 Audrey Hepburn and Julie Andrews (his co-star in the original Broadway production) 3 *Inside Out* 4 *Ghostbusters* 5 *Meet Me in St. Louis* 6 a) *Back to the Future* b) *The Italian Job* c) *The Silence of the Lambs* d) *Some Like It Hot* e) *The Usual Suspects* **When they were young** 1 Pope Francis 2 Jeremy Clarkson 3 Hillary Clinton 4 Nicola Sturgeon 5 Donald Trump

2015 saw two massively hyped new releases: *Spectre*, the
Here we look at some of the other

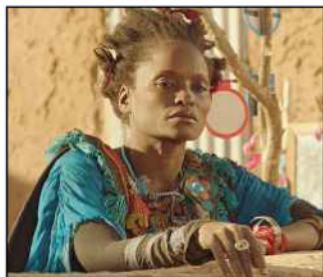
Thriller

The longest and most expensive Bond film to date, *Spectre* dazzled the critics with a stonker of an opening scene – as did the far grittier thriller, **Sicario**. In this, an FBI agent (Emily Blunt) raids a house in Arizona in search of a kidnap victim, only to find instead a pile of rotting corpses: the victims of an escalating cross-border drugs war. It's a "white-knuckle" ride of a film, with "screeching notes of paranoia and fear", said Peter Bradshaw in *The Guardian*. Very different, but similarly unnerving, **The Gift** stars Jason Bateman and Rebecca Hall as a married couple who, settling into their new home in LA, run into an old classmate. Soon, he's turning up at their house, bearing gifts. It may sound like a routine stalker flick, said Joe Morgenstern in *The Wall Street Journal*, but you'll be gripped. Finally, look out for the true-crime thriller **Foxcatcher**, and Steve Carell's mesmerising, and disturbing performance as an eccentric tycoon who drags two wrestlers into his privileged world.

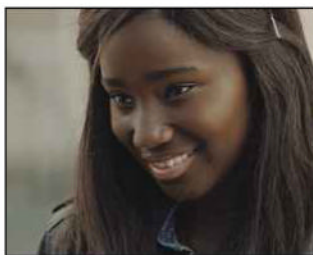


Foreign language

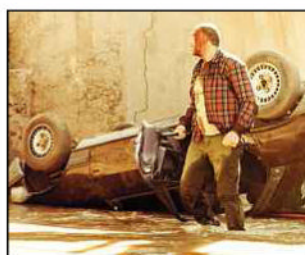
The Oscar-nominated drama **Timbuktu** is set during the 2012 occupation of Mali by Islamist militants, and is necessarily grim viewing. A woman is lashed for listening to music; a couple are stoned to death for adultery. But this beautifully shot film is leavened with wry humour,



said Kate Muir in *The Times*: in one scene, village boys play a football match with an imaginary ball, because the real one has been confiscated. Their ingenuity, like this film, is a wonderful riposte to the brutal philistinism of Islamic



State. **Girlhood** is a coming-of-age story about a gang of immigrant girls in the Paris suburbs. The four leads are "superb", though none is a professional actor, said Robbie Collin in *The Daily Telegraph*. They steal, bully and dance to Rihanna, and we are asked neither to admire nor condemn them. Filmed in monochrome in California, **A Girl Walks Home Alone at Night** is a Persian-language art-house movie about a teenage vampire who skateboards around a fictional Iranian town, dressed in full chador and listening to indie music. A reluctant bloodsucker, she earns our sympathy by mainly preying on those who deserve it. The



film – made on a shoestring – is unsettling, funny and seriously cool. **Wild Tales** made by Argentinian writer-director Damián Szifron, is a stylish collection of six revenge stories, stitched together into a portmanteau movie. Each begins with a mundane scenario, before spiralling out of control in horrific and

exhilarating ways. Perhaps the "greatest dog movie made without CGI", **White God** tells the story of Hagen, a mongrel who gets dumped outside Budapest, and ends up being trained as a fighting dog, said Kate Muir. Thrilling and bizarre, it's a fable about oppression, and the strength that outcasts can find in unity. In sharp contrast is the chilling black comedy **Force Majeure**, from Sweden: a family on a skiing holiday in France are having lunch when they see an avalanche surging towards them. They survive – but can the family recover from what was revealed in that terrifying moment?



Science fiction

If you go to see **Mad Max: Fury Road**, take something "to bite down on", said Camilla Long in

The Sunday Times. This "wild, inventive, barking-bonkers action movie" is basically one long car chase, "judderingly packed with eye-flaming explosions". George Miller, who gave us the original *Mad Max* films 30 years ago, returns as director. British actor Tom Hardy is at his unhinged best in the role that Mel Gibson made famous, but Charlize Theron, playing a ball-busting one-armed warrior, is the maddest person on screen – and the real hero of this daring, ultra-violent blockbuster. Matt Damon has to remain rather more composed in Ridley Scott's **The Martian**, when he is stranded, all alone, on the surface of Mars. With only a basic shelter and a small supply of food, he must survive through sheer ingenuity for four years until a rescue mission arrives. It is all "terrifically crowd-pleasing", said Mark Kermode in *The Observer*: "Scott's most enjoyable film in years".

24th Bond film, and the new Star Wars smashed box-office records. films that impressed the critics this year

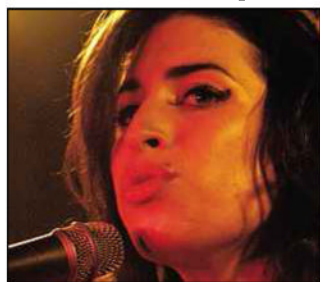
Comedy

“Funny, blithely witty, emotionally intricate and terrifically touching,” **Mistress America** is a treasure to savour, said Joe Morgenstern. Set in Manhattan, it is about an 18-year-old ingénue who first looks up to her new friend, an ostensibly sophisticated 30-year-old (Greta Gerwig), and then supersedes her. Co-written by Gerwig and director Noah Baumbach (who also made this year’s acclaimed **While We’re Young**), the film has a cracking plot, which whisks the characters off to a Connecticut mansion, and one of the “greatest comic set pieces this side of Billy Wilder”, said David Ehrlich in Time Out. Set in 1970s California, **The Diary of a Teenage Girl** is a funny, boldly unflinching (for which read highly explicit) coming-of-age comedy drama. There are moments when it all gets “uncomfortably close to the bone”, said Leslie Felperin in The Guardian, but this story of teenage sexual awakening is skilfully made, and refreshingly devoid of “sentiment or cant”.



Documentary

Asif Kapadia’s **Amy**, about the life of Amy Winehouse, doesn’t offer any “simple-minded” theories about the singer’s tragic decline, said Geoffrey Macnab in The Independent. Instead, it blends rarely seen TV footage and home video to tell the story of her brief life. “We know what will happen, yet the film plays out as suspensefully as a thriller,” said Deborah Ross in The Spectator



– until the final scenes, which are truly “heartbreaking”. **The Look of Silence** is the stunning follow-up to Joshua Oppenheimer’s 2012 film, *The*

Act of Killing, about the 1965–66 genocide in Indonesia. It follows a softly spoken ophthalmologist on a quest to



talk to the men who killed his brother. Hoping for contrition, he instead finds them glorifying in their crimes. Frederick Wiseman’s **National Gallery** is simply a “great, great film”, said Tim Robey in The Daily Telegraph. Compiled from hours of fly-on-the-wall footage, it yields insights into every aspect of the institution’s working. **The Green Prince** has a set-up as compelling as any fictional drama: it tells the story of a young Palestinian radical coerced by the Israeli security services, Shin Bet, to spy on Hamas, the terror group his own father founded.

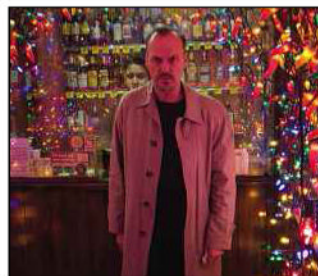
Drama

The winner of four Oscars, **Birdman** stars Michael Keaton – who once briefly joined the A list after being cast as Batman – as a washed-up actor whose career was blighted by his decision to take the lead in a superhero flick called *Birdman*. Charting his attempt to regain his credibility by staging a play on Broadway, the film pulsates with energy, said Anthony Lane in The New Yorker; it is exhausting, but also hilarious and profound. **Selma** was spurned at the Oscars, but the



critics loved it. Focusing on Martin Luther King’s famous civil rights march from Selma, in Alabama, to Montgomery,

the film pivots on an outstanding performance from British actor David Oyelowo, said David Denby in The New Yorker. He delivers “King’s fiery orations” with a skill that



is uncanny. **Brooklyn** – based on Colm Tóibín’s novel about a young Irish émigré to New York in the 1950s – was the romantic drama of the year, a weepie that earned its tears. Finally, a film about people having their homes repossessed in Florida might not sound like a must-see, said Deborah Ross – but **99 Homes** is as gripping as any thriller, “and if it doesn’t tear your heart out, you may need to ask yourself: is my heart cemented in?”

Animation

Disney’s first big-budget animated feature since its smash hit *Frozen* is “sweetly old-fashioned” said Brian Viner in the Daily Mail. Set in a futuristic Japanese-American city, **Big Hero 6** focuses on the friendship between Hiro – a 14-year-old boy – and Baymax, a kindly, overweight robot with a hilarious knack for stating the obvious. It’s poignant and charming. However, the animation movie of the year was **Inside Out**, made by the Disney subsidiary Pixar. Blazingly original, and the perfect antidote to the recent spate of remakes, sequels and superhero hokum, the film literally takes us inside the mind of Riley, an 11-year-old girl, where we meet five emotions. Perky Joy (Amy Poehler) runs the ship at first, but when Riley moves house, leaving her friends and her hometown behind, Sadness (Phyllis Smith) starts to take over. What follows is witty and wonderful. But if you want something other than Disney to capture your child’s imagination, then the “life-improving” **Song of the Sea** is a good bet, said Robbie Collin. It’s the haunting tale of a young boy living in a lighthouse, who one day discovers that his sister is a “selkie” – a Celtic mythical creature, half-human, half-seal. Irish director Tomm Moore favours old-fashioned artistry in an industry overtaken by digital imagery.



Gin, Twiglets and funny hats: Christmas with Mrs Thatcher

As friend and adviser to the prime minister, Tim Bell was expected to join the Thatcher family at Chequers every Christmas. Here, he looks back on 12 years of forced festivities and excruciating small talk with the Iron Lady

The first year I received my thick, formal invitation, I was flabbergasted. She was the prime minister. The most important person in the land other than the Queen (a fact which she made very clear at any opportunity). And she reminded me a bit of my mother. I never considered not going. You don't turn down an invitation like that. But was it fun; was it jolly? No, of course not. It was trying and traditional and terribly polite. And sort of horrible, really.

There were absolutely no presents – presents were not part of Christmas as far as Margaret was concerned. No Christmas jumpers. No open-necked shirts. No charades. No games. And no children – apart from the year we had our three-month-old baby Daisy and she was too small to leave at home, so I had to get special permission to take her with us.

I went with my then wife, Virginia, whom Denis always called Veronica, however many times she told him her name was Virginia. (The first year we went, though, she and I weren't married, which was a shocking breach of protocol.) Every year when the invitation arrived, she'd say: "Oh, my God. Again! Who's going to be there this year?"

And it was always the same people. Lord McAlpine – the long-time Tory treasurer – with his wife Romilly. Lovely Gordon Reece, the political strategist, who became terribly giggly after a few drinks and who once arrived in a bright yellow Rolls-Royce he'd hired for the occasion. Ronnie Millar, Margaret's speechwriter. Lord Thorneycroft, a long-time party chairman. Mark and Carol, of course. And there were always a couple of biddies in tow – Auntie Joy, Denis's sister, and two or three oldies Margaret had invited at some stage of the year from her constituency, who were rounded up by her secretary.

Norman Tebbit was there once – when his wife Margaret was in Stoke Mandeville Hospital after the Brighton bombing. Jeffrey Archer came a couple of times – pompous and self-important, as always. As did the minister John Gummer. And Rupert Murdoch was asked a couple of times but he never came. The



"You don't turn down an invitation from the prime minister"

"There were absolutely no presents. No Christmas jumpers. No open-necked shirts. No games. And no children"

other person who was never there was Jimmy Savile. He always claimed to have spent 11 Christmases at Chequers, once arriving in a suit covered in Christmas decorations and calling out: "Who wants to ring my bell?", but it was untrue. People make up such rubbish.

The protocol for the day was utterly traditional and exactly the same every year. Festivities would commence at 12.30pm sharp. If you were there early, you'd park up the road and wait a bit. Nobody wanted to get there first. One year we were all already there when they stormed in late from church. Denis was muttering under his breath about the sermon going on too long and rushing for the drinks table. Margaret said darkly: "That's one vicar who doesn't want to be a bishop." That was her little joke.

Inside it was warm and cosy with big fires, wood panelling and an enormous tree. There were carols playing on a loop (her favourite was *Once in Royal David's City*) and we'd all stand around in the

central hallway drinking champagne – ordinary, not vintage – and eating crisps and nuts and maybe even a Twiglet in our three-piece suits and smart dresses (Margaret looked terrible in casual clothes).

Political talk was banned. So we talked about Christmas Day and the *Morecambe and Wise Christmas Special* and *Yes Minister*, which she loved,

and we'd all try not to look at the Christmas cards from very important people, because that was vulgar. Thankfully, Denis was always full of joie de vivre and chirped things up enormously – particularly

after he'd downed several enormous tumblers of gin and mixed. Naturally, he was generous with the booze: brandy, port, whatever you wanted. He was fantastic. He understood people and relationships and knew how to deal with her. They had a fantastic bond and he used to say the most terrible things to make her laugh.

I had a completely natural chemistry with Margaret but you wouldn't describe her as friendly or warm to the wives. She was

courteous but constantly distracted by people bringing in messages and taking telephone calls, and worrying that we'd miss the Queen's Speech, which was the centrepiece of her day. All the timings were worked back from it. She was terribly middle-class and ordinary, and respected the Establishment enormously. She virtually curtsied when the Queen came on the television. She used to curtsy before the royal children, for goodness sake.



The Thatcher family celebrating Christmas at Chequers for the final time, in 1989

One year, the Chequers television was broken – she and Denis had been watching a video of *The Sound of Music* and the videotape had got stuck in the recorder part – and she was in a terrible state, saying: “What about the Queen’s Speech? It’s a disaster!” So she rang up Lord Weinstock, the head of the General Electric Company, in a panic: “Arnold, my television’s not working. It has to be fixed for the Queen’s Speech.” And he found a GEC engineer and sent him round straight away to fix it.

Eventually, back in the hallway, someone would interrupt the champagne and Twiglets and Denis’s enormous cocktails to announce: “Lunch is served”, and we’d be summoned into the wood-panelled dining room. It was shrimp cocktail and roast turkey with all the trimmings, and crackers and funny hats – although I never saw Margaret wearing one there.

Then at 2.45pm on the dot, we’d file into the Churchill Library and take our places for the Queen’s Speech, with Her Greatness in the middle, right opposite the television, saying “Shhh!” very loudly. You couldn’t speak, you couldn’t cough. You couldn’t move. You had to get yourself into a reasonably comfortable position because if you shifted once it had started she’d give you a killer death stare.

She would never actually criticise the Queen, but she would usually make a sarcastic comment at the end – “Oh dear, she’s going to feel sorry for the poor again.” And then turn to me and moan: “Why is she so well lit on film? Why can’t you light me like that?”

Afterwards, we were sent outside to stretch our legs and admire the swimming pool and wish the security guards a happy Christmas in their concrete bothy. As Margaret made polite conversation with them, we would listen to security alarms going off all over the place. It was always Denis. We could see him on the security screens walking through areas that triggered the alarms, or playing golf in the dark and setting off the sensors. He didn’t care. He used to stride straight through them. He just thought it was funny. His greatest skill was to laugh at himself. Margaret didn’t laugh at herself as much as she might have.

Mark and Carol were always there. Mark would try to get in and out as fast as he possibly could. One year he arrived by

helicopter on Christmas Day. He was always flamboyant and self-important. And always whingeing – pacing up and down in front of the fireplace, complaining about what the newspapers had written. Denis had no patience with him: “Don’t be so wet. If you don’t like what you read, then don’t read the effing things!” he’d shout.

Carol, meanwhile, would spend the day trying to avoid having a row with her mother. You could see her biting her tongue

and would just have to look the other way. They were one of those families who liked taking the p*** out of each other. They enjoyed it. But it must have been difficult for Carol. She had her mother’s sharpness and acerbic tongue, but she was a sweetheart. Men always wanted to go out with her so they could find out what was going on with her mother. And Margaret was never very intimate or maternal. She once said to me of having twins: “I was in hospital and I gave birth and I was just about to get up and they said: ‘Hang on, there’s another one!’” She talked as if she was a cow having a calf or a horse having a foal.

Sometimes we’d stay on for the evening and all get a bit legless. Gordon Reece always came the closest to letting himself down. He’d drink loads of champagne and go off into the corner and start giggling and trying to catch your eye when you were talking to her. We all played silly games like that.

And at some stage the boys (including Denis with his endless fags) would sneak off to

the Churchill loo, which had a huge saddle-style seat and a cigar ashtray and we’d talk through the door at each other and giggle and smoke as if Margaret were the headmistress and we were the naughty children. And then at about 9pm we’d all go home and it would be over for another year.

I don’t think anyone enjoyed it as such. Particularly the wives. We just all went through it. But we’d never have dreamt of turning the invitation down, even in the 12th year, when the novelty was wearing a bit thin and we were all thinking: “This might be the last one.”



Bell: “Sometimes we’d get a bit legless”

And then, suddenly, it was. In November 1990 she was ousted from office and, of course, Chequers. And kind Alistair McAlpine recreated the entire day for her at the Dorchester with all the same people. It was like attending a wake. We all sat there and Margaret was miles away, thinking about how she’d been stabbed in the back, and we were all even more polite than ever and it was just dreadful. And that year even Denis couldn’t liven things up.

Right Or Wrong by Tim Bell is published by Bloomsbury at £25. A version of this article first appeared in the Daily Mail. To buy from The Week bookshop for £20, call 0843-060 0020 or visit www.theweek.co.uk/bookshop.

CHLOE KNOWS SLEEPING ROUGH CAN KILL. AT LEAST SHE HAS SOME OPTIONS.

- ☐ Self harm to get a hospital bed
- ☐ Commit a crime to sleep in a cell
- ☐ Sleep with a stranger

The other option is YOU. Please give a homeless young person a safe bed this Christmas.

It's not much of a choice. Chloe knows one more night sleeping rough could be her last. Just being homeless you are twice as likely to die.* Yet with nowhere to go, no food and no money, Chloe is completely alone. She's at high risk of assault, hypothermia or suicide. And as the cold, winter weather gets worse, her only choice is to find a bed, any way she can.

But you can give her another option. Just £15 could give her a warm, safe room, hot meal and support in rebuilding her life. This Christmas, there will be around 15,000 young people, who can feel forced to take desperate measures, simply because they've nowhere to sleep. They all need another option. Please let that option be you.

£15 will help give Chloe a safe bed this Christmas. Please call 0800 138 0473 or visit centrepoin.org.uk

This is a true story, but to protect the privacy of those we help, a model has been used for the photograph.

- ☐ **£15** could give a young person a hot meal, warm, safe bed and someone to talk to.
- ☐ **£50** could provide someone with clean clothes, a warm, safe bed and essential health checks.
- ☐ **£100** could provide a warm, safe bed over Christmas plus the professional support these young people need to turn their lives around.

☐ **Other** £ _____ (your own amount)

Name as it appears on your card: _____

Address: _____

Postcode: _____

Email: _____ Telephone: _____

By providing your telephone number and email address you agree that Centrepoin may contact you on occasion about your donations by telephone, SMS and/or email.

giftaid it

Under the Government's revised Gift Aid scheme, all donations made by UK tax payers are worth a quarter more.

☐ I am a UK tax payer and would like Centrepoin to claim back the tax on all donations I have made for the four years prior to this year and all donations I make from the date of this declaration until I notify you otherwise. I understand that I must have paid an amount of income tax or capital gains tax at least equal to the tax that will be reclaimed by all charities to which I donate in that tax year (at least 25p for each £1 donated). Date DD/MM/YY

*University of Sheffield, 2012. Please see centrepoin.org.uk/sasi for more details. Findings are based on data collected by CRESR in January 2010.

NAP1516W-02P

- ☐ I enclose a cheque made payable to Centrepoin
- ☐ I would like to pay by Visa/CAF card/Mastercard/Switch/Maestro (please delete as appropriate)

Card Number: _____ (Maestro only)

Valid from: ____/____/____ Expiry date: ____/____/____ Issue no: ____

Signature: _____ Date: _____

Please complete this form and return it to:
Centrepoin, Freepost ANG 2640, Colchester CO2 8BR.

In accordance with the 1998 Data Protection Act, Centrepoin will use your personal data to process your donation and send you updates and appeals from time to time. If you do not want to receive this information please write to Supporter Care, Central House, 25 Camperdown Street, London E1 8DZ. We will never sell or share your details with other organisations.

give with confidence

centre point give homeless young people a future

Registered Charity No 292411 NAP1516W-02P

Theatre

Peter Pan Goes Wrong

Playwrights: Henry Lewis,
Jonathan Sayer, Henry Shields
Director: Adam Meggido

Apollo Theatre,
London W1
(0844-482 9671)
Until 11 September 2016

Running time:
2hrs 5mins
(including interval)

★★★

Mischief Theatre, the young troupe of crack farceurs behind this riotously funny gem of a play, seem to be taking over the West End, said Matt Wolf on TheArtsDesk.com. Their Olivier-winning smash *The Play That Goes Wrong* is packing them in at the Duchess Theatre. A new show, *The Comedy About a Bank Robbery*, is due to open at the Criterion in April. And now the company has found a seasonal West End berth for *Peter Pan Goes Wrong*, a stupendous “study in comic delirium” first seen on the London fringe two years ago. The mystery of how this lot survive serious injury as their sets collapse around them and on top of them “remains one of the more cheerful conundrums besetting London theatreland at the moment”. The chances are, though, that you’ll be “too busy joining in the crescendos of laughter” to give it much thought.

As with the original *Play*, the set-up is that we are watching incompetent amateurs from the Cornley Polytechnic Drama Society attempt to put on a play, said Jane Shilling in The Daily Telegraph. The spoof programme notes hint at near-fatal technical problems during rehearsals (a crocodile was involved, apparently) and, sure enough, the health and safety announcements are barely over “before anarchy takes hold”.



A “study in comic delirium”

There are “spectacular flying disasters”, Tinkerbell gets plugged into the mains, and the scenery develops a “malevolent will of its own” – including a Darling nursery bunk bed that subsides into a “grisly millefeuille of collapsed slats and squashed actors”. Not a single opportunity for a laugh is missed in this “absolute must-see” show, said Ben Hewis on WhatsOnStage.com. And the entire cast of ten – “who rarely stop falling, bumping, tripping, slipping or bouncing off things” – are truly impressive.

Sure, it’s a slick and canny show, said Dominic Maxwell in The Times – but the joke does wear thin and the “steroidal slapstick” is too contrived to engage you emotionally. Still, it all went down a storm with the family audience at the performance I attended. Maybe I’m just the “Scowly Critic Who Needs to Chill Out a Bit”.

The week’s other opening

Into the Woods Royal Exchange Theatre, Manchester (0161-833 9833)

Matthew Xia’s deft production of Stephen Sondheim’s fairy-tale musical “revels in wicked comedy, wonderment and romance, then rips up the storybook to deliver a sucker punch of psychological force” (The Times).

Musical

Chitty Chitty Bang Bang

Playwright: Jeremy Sams
Adapted from the MGM film
and the book by Ian Fleming
Music and lyrics: Richard
M. Sherman and Robert
B. Sherman
Director: James Brining

West Yorkshire Playhouse,
Leeds (0113-213 7700)
Until 30 January 2016,
then touring the UK

Running time: 2hrs 30mins
(including interval)

★★★★

It’s “boom time” for fabulous stage versions of 1960s family film musicals, said Dominic Maxwell in The Times. A few weeks ago a superb *Mary Poppins* opened in Bristol ahead of a big national tour. And now Ian Fleming’s beloved “old banger” has come “out of the garage” for the first time since its stage premiere at the London Palladium in 2002 – and it, too, proves “fabulous family entertainment”. James Brining’s joyous production fairly “vrooms along”, and the child actors are “sweet” rather than cloying. In fact, this revival is “consistently superior” to the Palladium show, said Roger Foss in The Stage. In that production “the car was the real star”. Here, both car and show “shine as never before, with glowing performances all round and rousing orchestral arrangements of the Sherman brothers’ catchy score”. This *Chitty* hits the road in January; don’t miss it.

The West Yorkshire Playhouse has “thrown everything” at this scintillating show, said Jonathan Brown in The Independent. There’s “whizzy gadgetry and a vast and breathtaking set” which uses giant video projections to “transport us through the winding green lanes of post-Edwardian England before hurling us off Beachy Head into a starry sky, or setting us



The “menacing” Childcatcher

afloat beneath the menacing bow of a dreadnought”. And in terms of storytelling, this production “brings a new sense of vulnerability to the fractured Potts family”, while never straying too far from the winning blend of fun and peril that defines the classic Roald Dahl-scripted film.

Jon Robyns (Caractacus Potts) and Amy Griffiths (Truly Scrumptious) are as “likeable a pair of leads as you could wish for”, said Ron Simpson on WhatsOnStage.com. And Stephen Matthews’s Childcatcher is “genuinely menacing, aided by eerie projections reminiscent of expressionist German cinema”.

This delightful show sends Chitty flying “higher and further than ever before”, said Alfred Hickling in The Guardian. “For the ultimate sugar rush, I can only recommend you purchase a ticket Toot Sweet.”

CD of the week

Fleur East: Love, Sax and Flashbacks

Syco Music £12.99

TV talent shows are floundering, so former *X Factor* contestant Fleur East may be the last singer to carve a career out of one. If so, this is a fitting swansong: there’s “not an ounce of originality” but “lots of frothy fun” (Sunday Times).

Stars reflect the overall quality of reviews and our own independent assessment (4 stars=don’t miss; 1 star=don’t bother)

This week's designs

from Swoon Editions



the Karla

Our best-selling mid-century armchair. The oak has a driftwood effect and the upholstery is stonewashed. Just £329.



the Camille

An elegant chest of drawers with a hand-painted finish in Dove Grey and brass sand-casted handles. Just £349.



the Orson

This industrial bar stool has a hand-welded steel frame and a mango wood saddle seat. Just £89.

SAVE £20

With voucher code **WEEKMAG**
Visit swooneditions.com/weekmag
or call 020 3137 2464

NEW DESIGNS DAILY
CRAFTSMAN-MADE
FREE DELIVERY & RETURNS

SWOON
EDITIONS

Save £20 on a £200 minimum spend. Prices shown accurate at time of print.
Cannot be used alongside any other offers or promotions – ends at midnight on 31.12.16.
Full terms can be found at swooneditions.com/terms

Star Wars: The Force Awakens ★★★★★

Same plot, same thrills, same cinematic gold Dir: J.J. Abrams 2hrs 15mins (12A)

“Phew!” The seventh instalment in George Lucas’s never-ending space opera – possibly the most eagerly anticipated film ever made, and a box office smash before it even opened – is here, and I am delighted to report that the “Force is resoundingly” with it, said Kate Muir in *The Times*. Director J.J. Abrams has delivered a “humongous piece of cinema”. His “cracking reboot” is “all that a sequel should be and more: a nostalgic homage to the 1977 original”, with humour, buckets of “intergalactic, warp-speed, panoramic blockbuster action”, a host of new characters – and the welcome return of some old faces.



The stormtroopers are back

As the familiar scrolling script explains as the film opens, 30 years have passed since the rebels celebrated their victory over the Empire at the end of *Return of the Jedi* – the last of the series that wasn’t a prequel. Now a new threat is looming, said Joe Morgenstern in *The Wall Street Journal*: the First Order, a fascist junta with legions of stormtroopers, and the Vader-like Kylo Ren, a complex villain brilliantly played by Adam Driver. To join in the inevitable battle of good against evil, we have “an accidental heroine” (the glorious Daisy Ridley), and a reluctant hero: a disaffected stormtrooper played by the “wonderfully buoyant” John Boyega. Together these “adventurous kids” manage to be both charming and “very funny”, in a film that “excels at being funny and exciting in equal measure”.

But of course, that leaves a question: where is Luke Skywalker? The answer is, no one knows. He disappeared years ago. Our young heroes eventually seek out the lost Jedi, and it’s not giving too much away to say that a grizzled Mark Hamill does make an “enigmatic” reappearance, said Peter Bradshaw in *The Guardian*. We also welcome the return of the droids R2-D2 and C-3PO, Princess Leia (now a tough, grandmotherly general in the resistance), and Han Solo and his hairy friend Chewbacca. I have to say, when

those last two appeared on screen, “I had a feeling in the cinema I haven’t had since I was 16 – not knowing whether to burst into tears or into applause”. Of course, the film is sentimental; it’s also melodramatic and ridiculous. And yet you forgive it. Brimming with excitement, and its own kind of generosity, this quasi-Arthurian romance “powers along on a great surging rip tide of idealism and optimism”. I loved it.

All credit to J.J. Abrams, said Robbie Collin in *The Daily Telegraph*. He has succeeded, brilliantly, in jolting the series out of the slumber it has been in since Jar Jar Binks first reared his “unlovely head” in 1999, and reconnecting it with its “much-pined-for past”. From the very first scene, with its “forearm prickling” shot of the silhouette of a dark destroyer slicing past a pale planet, you know that you are in safe hands for the longed-awaited return to that galaxy far, far away.

In The Heart of the Sea ★★★★★

Swashbuckler or serious drama? Dir: Ron Howard 2hrs 2mins (12A)

In 1820, a Nantucket whaling ship, the *Essex*, was capsized by a monstrous sperm whale in the middle of the Pacific Ocean. The disaster would inspire Herman Melville’s classic novel *Moby-Dick*, and it is this literary connection that provides the starting point for *In The Heart of the Sea*. In Ron Howard’s film, the young Melville (Ben Whishaw) persuades a reticent sea dog (Brendan Gleeson) who survived the sinking to tell his story. What follows is a “brutal and beautiful” portrait of the realities of 19th century whaling, said Helen O’Hara in *The Daily Telegraph*.



With some CGI assistance, Howard succeeds brilliantly at bringing the surging seas “vividly to life”. However, his thinly

sketched human characters – even the *Essex*’s muscular first mate (Chris Hemsworth), who emerges as the hero of the story – “never seem as real” as the ocean spray. It’s all a little hard to take seriously, with everyone running around shouting “Avast!” and “Ahoy!”, said Tom Huddleston in *Time Out*. Nevertheless, the spectacle of the beefy Hemsworth stripped to the waist, harpooning everything in sight, is “hard to resist”.

The trouble with this movie, said Jordan Hoffman in *The Guardian*, is that it can’t decide if it’s a swashbuckler or a serious drama. And all the “rolling” between the genres is liable to “make you seasick”.

Snoopy and Charlie Brown: The Peanuts Movie ★★

A Christmas outing for young children Dir: Steve Martino 1hr 33mins (U)

Anyone who felt inclined to cry “Good grief!” when it emerged that Charles M. Schulz’s *Peanuts* cartoon strip was being given a big-screen makeover can relax, said Michael Rechtshaffen in *The Hollywood Reporter*. This “thoroughly engaging” animated film, co-written by Schulz’s son and grandson, preserves everything fans loved about the original.



The plot sees Charlie Brown (pitch-perfectly voiced by 11-year-old Noah Schnapp) falling head over heels in love, but too unsure of himself, as ever, to do anything about it. All the “touchstones” are in place, from the unsympathetic Lucy, offering counselling at five cents a turn, to Charlie’s beloved beagle Snoopy, who finds

life so much easier than he does. Blue Sky Studios have spent millions recreating the simple, hand-drawn quality of the Schulz strip cartoons, said Robbie Collin in *The Daily Telegraph*. The result is “a thing of serious beauty”, even if the story is on the thin side.

I’m afraid I found it all rather “sanitised”, said Kate Muir in *The Times*. One of the things that made the original *Peanuts* so special, so different, was its existential bleakness, expressed in Charlie Brown’s crippling anxieties and Lucy’s “devastating put-downs”. What’s on offer here seems “far too cheery”. That said, it “will serve young children well as a Christmas outing”.

Warren Evans
warrenevans.com | 020 7693 8988

50% OFF
HUGE JANUARY
SALE

'VERONA' £510
DOUBLE BED **£375**

Our 'Superior'
4000 Pocket Sprung
double mattress **£1,600**
£595

★★★★★ mattress quality
★★★★★ value
★★★★★ mattress range

Which? members survey June (2015)

200
Years
British
CRAFTSMANSHIP

Hand-crafted to
last for a lifetime

18 bed designs available
in any size

- Free delivery and installation
- Money back promise
- 10 year guarantee

Request a brochure...
01777 869 669
www.revivalbeds.co.uk

REVIVAL
BEDS

loaf

WE'RE HAVING A LITTLE
BIRTHDAY
SALE!
WHAT ARE YOU WAITING FOR?

BEDS, SOFAS & FURNITURE FOR LOAFERS
BATTERSEA NOTTING HILL LOAF.COM

A Natural
Night's
Sleep

At Naturalmat, in the heart of Devon, we
hand make mattresses and beds using
natural, organic and sustainable materials...
for a truly natural night's sleep.

naturalmat®
Mattresses made by hand in Devon

www.naturalmat.co.uk
01392 877 247
Showrooms in London and Devon

Best books... Raymond Briggs

Raymond Briggs, the illustrator and author of *Father Christmas and The Snowman*, picks his six favourite books. His latest book, *Notes from the Sofa*, is published by Unbound at £14.99

If... The Graphic Novel by Steve Bell, 2015 (Jonathan Cape £18.99). I love any book by the great Steve Bell, the master of invention, but his latest is his biggest tome ever: 224 pages and weighing 3lbs. It's now impossible to look at Cameron without seeing a pink condom on his head. Brilliant.

Testing Times by Peter Brookes, 2015 (Robson Press £18.99). Wonderful cartoons, but also stupendous caricature portraits and satirical writing – all done with breathtaking skill, ease and enjoyment. Cameron appears on the cover, sweating and trapped between the big buttocks of Angela Merkel, who is depicted as the Athena tennis poster girl.

Trog: Forty Graphic Years – The Art of Wally Fawkes by Frank Whitford, 1987 (out of print). Wally Fawkes is not only a superb strip artist, political cartoonist and caricaturist, he can also play jazz clarinet! He did a cartoon about my book *When The Wind Blows* and gave me the original: my cup runneth over.

Over the Moon by Imtiaz Dharker, 2014 (Bloodaxe £12). A deeply moving poet: her poem of bereavement is almost unbearable, as I'm in the midst of bereavement myself. Carol Ann Duffy says if there were a World Laureate, Dharker would be the only candidate. She also does wonderful drawings. A poet who can draw!

Talking Heads by Alan Bennett, 1998 (Ebury £8.99). Any book by Alan Bennett could have been my first choice, but I'm rereading this one at the moment. It's incredible how one speaker apparently rambling on inconsequently can reveal so much of their life without directly referring to it. Genius.

Collected Poems by Philip Larkin, 1988 (Faber £14.99). It's difficult to make a quick summary of the life work of a superb poet who found poetry in everyday life – “often fairly unhappy but nevertheless very true”, perhaps. I hadn't realised I'd owned this for more than a quarter of a century: must be a poem in that somewhere...

Titles in print are available from The Week bookshop on 0843-060 0020. For out-of-print books visit www.bibliofind.com

At-a-glance guide to the best holiday television

Sat 26 December

The Farmer's Llamas A new Shaun the Sheep special. BBC1 6pm (30mins).

Britain's Favourite Children's Books with David Walliams Walliams has tea with Judith Kerr and talks to several other leading children's authors. C4 6.30pm (90mins).

Dickensian Dickens' characters are brought together in a 20-part drama by *EastEnders* writer Tony Jordan. BBC1 7pm (30mins), then showing at various times over the festive season.

And Then There Were None A stellar cast gathers for this new three-part adaptation of Agatha Christie's murder mystery. BBC1 9pm (60mins); Sun 27, 9pm and Mon 28, 9.05pm.

Mon 28 December

Behind the Candelabra (2013) Fabulous Liberace biopic starring Michael Douglas and Matt Damon. BBC2 9pm (110mins).

Wed 30 December

Great Barrier Reef with David Attenborough New three-part series about the world's largest coral reef. BBC1 9pm (60mins).

Thur 31 December

Silver Linings Playbook (2012) Endearingly offbeat romcom with Jennifer Lawrence and Bradley Cooper. Film4 11.10pm (140mins).

Fri 1 January

Little Women (1994) Claire Danes and Susan Sarandon feature in this adaption of Alcott's much-loved classic. BBC2 12.45pm (115mins).

The Sound of Music (1965) Classic Julie Andrews musical. BBC1 1.15pm (170mins).

Billionaire Boy David Walliams stars in this new comedy drama based on his children's book. BBC1 7pm (60mins).



Dickensian: starts on Boxing Day at 7pm on BBC1

Sherlock: The Abominable Bride Benedict Cumberbatch's sleuth is transplanted from the modern day to Victorian London for this one-off special. BBC1 9pm (90mins).

Sat 2 January

Leningrad & the Orchestra that Defied Hitler The extraordinary story of how a group of starving musicians assembled to perform Shostakovich's *Symphony No. 7* during the Siege of Leningrad. BBC2 9.10pm (90mins).

Tinker Tailor Soldier Spy (2011) Gary Oldman and Colin Firth head the cast in this downbeat but highly watchable John le Carré spy story. C4 11.35pm (145mins).

Marley (2012) Highly acclaimed documentary about the reggae legend. C4 1am (210mins).

Sun 3 January

Deutschland 83 First part of a tense German thriller set in the 1980s. C4 9pm (60mins).

War and Peace Gillian Anderson stars in Andrew Davies's six-part adaptation of Tolstoy's epic novel. BBC1 9pm (60mins).



The Archers: what happened last week

Rob turns up at Adam and Ian's stag do at The Bull, much to everyone's surprise. Ian and Rob forgo the drinking games. Instead, Rob sneakily compliments Ian on his open relationship. When questioned by Ian, Rob brings up Adam's affair with the picker and the “on/off thing” with Charlie. Ian doesn't let on he was unaware of Adam's dalliances. Outside, Charlie wishes Adam well and asks not be forgotten. As Adam reassures him, Ian appears, saying he thinks it's time they left. On the wedding day, Ian needs reassuring that Adam wants to spend his life with him. Helen's surprised that Rob went to the stag do and is going to the wedding. Rob claims he wants to support her. At the event, Rob schmoozes Jennifer and assures her their secret is safe with him. Adam and Ian exchange vows. Ian discards his planned speech and talks about Adam being the only man for him and how things can be difficult. Carol pulls out of *Calender Girls* to be with her daughter, who's going through a break-up. David calls Ruth on their anniversary and leaves a message telling her he loves her. Brian drops hints to Lillian about moving back to her own home. Jean, Lynda's new cast member, is a handful. Shula leaves a house-warming gift for Richard Locke at Keeper's Cottage. At the nativity, Richard seems to recognise Rob. Rob claims not to know him. Helen runs out of the nativity, needing air. Rob tells her she must take care of herself and their son. David and Pip are stunned Ruth is staying in New Zealand for Christmas.

Coming up for auction

More than 20 works of art have been donated by Ken Howard, Christopher Orr, William Bowyer and other Royal Academicians to the **Art for Life: Exhibition and Charity Auction** at Christie's. The auction is on 14 January, and the pictures are on view from 9 January. Christie's, London SW7. RSVP for the reception and auction: 020-3469 6085; RSVP@christies.com. 50% of proceeds will go to Cancer Research UK and 50% to the artists.

Stolen

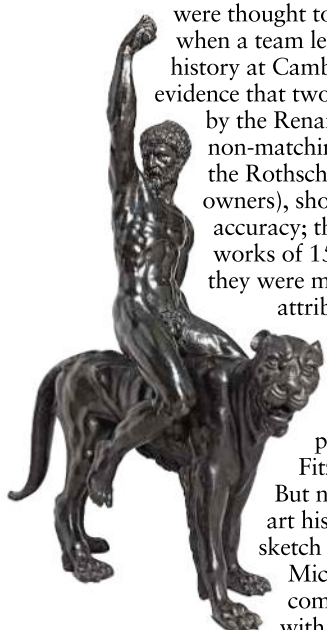


One art historian described it as “the most serious theft in the history of Italian art”; the mayor of Verona called it “a wound for the city”. On Thursday 19 November, three armed men burst into the museum in Verona’s 14th century Castelvecchio fortress, just as it was closing. They tied up a security guard and a cashier, before snatching 17 paintings worth an estimated total of €10m-€15m (£7m-£10m), and escaping in the guard’s car. The paintings, by a number of Renaissance masters, included *The Judgment of Solomon* by Tintoretto (pictured, main image), *Madonna of the Quail* by Pisanello (top left), Giovanni Caroto’s *Portrait of a Child with a Drawing* (bottom left) – as well as works by Peter

Paul Rubens and Andrea Mantegna. Mayor Flavio Tosi suggested the paintings had been stolen to order by a criminal collector. “Someone sent them, they knew exactly where they were going,” he said, adding that 11 of the stolen works were masterpieces, and would be impossible to sell on. However, Alberto Deregibus, from the carabinieri unit charged with guarding national heritage, suggested this theory was implausible. “It may just have been delinquents who thought: ‘Let’s steal them and decide later what to do with them,’” he said. The art critic Tomaso Montanari expressed his fury that such a valuable collection should have been protected by a single armed guard, “like a supermarket”.

Rediscovered

Michelangelo, probably the world’s most famous sculptor, is known to have worked with bronze, yet none of those sculptures were thought to have survived – until February this year, when a team led by Paul Joannides, professor of art history at Cambridge University, produced compelling evidence that two mysterious metre-high pieces were made by the Renaissance master. The two sculptures, a non-matching pair of men riding panthers (known as the Rothschild Bronzes after their 19th century owners), show the artist’s distinctive anatomical accuracy; they are very much in the style of his works of 1500-1510, and a neutron scan confirmed they were made at around that time. Crucial to the attribution is a tiny sketch by an apprentice of Michelangelo thought to be a copy of one of his master’s designs, showing a muscular youth riding a panther. The bronzes, now owned by an anonymous private collector, went on show at the Fitzwilliam Museum in Cambridge this year. But not everyone was convinced. The German art historian Frank Zöllner argued that the sketch has not been proven to be one of Michelangelo’s designs, and that the stylistic comparison was “a little tricky, especially with such an adventurous attribution”.



Destroyed

To mark Winston Churchill’s 80th birthday in 1954, Graham Sutherland was commissioned by both Houses of Parliament to produce a full-sized portrait of the wartime leader.

Unfortunately, both the former PM and his wife, Clementine, took a violent dislike to the picture; they took it to their country house, Chartwell, in Kent, but it was never displayed, and was rumoured to have been destroyed. This year, in her biography of Lady Churchill, Sonia Purnell finally revealed the truth about the painting’s fate. In the Churchill archives, Purnell had stumbled on a taped interview with the couple’s long-serving private secretary, Grace Hamblin; in this, Hamblin explained that Lady Churchill had told her that the portrait must be “got rid of”. So, “in the dead of night”, Hamblin and her brother, a gardener, had dragged it out of the cellar where it was kept, put it into his van and driven it to his house, some miles away. There they lit a bonfire in his back garden, and burnt it. “I destroyed it,” Hamblin confessed, “but Lady C and I decided we would not tell anyone.”



Sold – at record-breaking prices

Christie's in New York sold more than \$1bn-worth of modern art over a period of just three days in May. Soaring ahead of works by Warhol, Lichtenstein and Rothko, which fetched "mere" tens of millions each, was Picasso's *Les Femmes d'Alger (Version "O")* – which went for \$179m (£120m), making it the most expensive painting ever sold at auction. Picasso's 1954 tribute to Delacroix now resides in the private collection of Hamad bin Jassim Al Thani, Qatar's former prime minister.

A few months later, Amedeo Modigliani's *Nu Couché* came close to breaking Picasso's record. When he painted it, in Paris at the end of the First World War, Modigliani was wrecked by alcoholism, high on hashish and wretchedly poor. The painting was exhibited briefly during his life, as part of a series of nudes, at the Galerie Berthe Weill in 1917, but the police closed the show down on grounds of indecency. Modigliani died of tuberculosis three years later, aged 35. This November, *Nu Couché* (pictured below) came up for auction – and sold for \$170m (£113m), again at Christie's in New York. This time the buyer was Liu Yiqian, a one-time taxi driver from Shanghai who made a fortune on China's nascent stock market. Liu plans to exhibit the piece in one of the two private museums he and his wife own in Shanghai.

Another painter treated with indifference during his lifetime who earned big prices this year was Paul Gauguin; his 1892 masterpiece *When Will You Marry?* (pictured right), depicting two Tahitian women, was sold privately for a reported \$300m (£200m), smashing the record for a single piece of art. It was purchased from a Swiss family trust; the buyer is believed to have been the Qatar Museums Authority.

Such masterpieces of modern art have come to be regarded as lucrative investments in difficult times, outperforming stocks, gold and property. *Les Femmes d'Alger*, for instance, sold in 1997 for



\$32m (£21m) – meaning its value has risen by almost 600% in less than 20 years. And while there have been recent reports of a slight slowdown in the global art market, the top end is expected to keep booming. The richest 0.1% of buyers are pulling away from the remaining 99.9%, noted the FT, creating ever more demand "at the very top of the market". Prices for rare "trophy" pieces have risen accordingly. Picassos and Gauguins are examples of what economists call "positional goods": things that by their nature can only be owned by a very few people.

The boom in art sales is largely down to China, said Barron's. As recently as 2000, China didn't really have an art market; now it is worth some \$16bn per year. Christie's said buyers in Asia accounted for 27% of its global sales at auction last year. And despite slowing economic growth, there are still plenty of potential investors in China: it has some 596 billionaires (the US has 537).



Defrauded



In February, two Spanish swindlers who tried to exploit rocketing art prices by selling a forged Goya painting found themselves the victims of an elaborate double-cross. The story began in 2003, when the unnamed brothers contracted to buy a portrait of the artist Antonio Maria Esquivel, believing it to be a genuine Goya. Before they handed over the money, however, experts declared it to be a 19th century fake. The matter ended up in a court in Girona, where the judge ruled that the brothers could have the painting for the €20,000 (£14,500) deposit they had already paid, rather than the original agreed price, of €270,000. Then, late last year, the pair struck a deal to sell the painting for €4m, using the same bogus authenticity certificate that had deceived them a decade earlier.

Their buyer was supposedly an Arab sheikh, represented by an Italian middleman – who demanded €300,000 as a commission. The brothers duly borrowed that money, and travelled to Turin, where they were given a down payment of 1.7m Swiss francs for the painting. They made sure the cash was genuine, but at some point, the middleman must have effected a switch, because when the brothers tried to pay the money into a bank in Geneva, it emerged the notes were photocopies. By then, the middleman had vanished with the only real money in the affair – the €300,000 commission. To cap the brothers' misfortunes, the forged notes were discovered by customs as they crossed into France. They were subsequently charged with fraud in Spain, and their fake Goya confiscated.

2015's most outstanding properties



▲ **Cornwall:** Gradna House, Plaidy, Looe. A renovated 1930s house, designed by Stan Bolt, in a clifftop position with fantastic views over Looe Bay and private steps down to the beach and foreshore. 5 beds, 2 baths/showers, kitchen/diner, 2 receps, cloakroom/WC, utility, large garage with studio/workshop, large terraced gardens and woodland garden, 1.7 acres. Still on the market, asking price £3m; Savills (01872-243200).



◀ **Shropshire:** Elsie Manor, Seifton, Ludlow. A renovated 16th century, Grade II* Elizabethan manor house in a rural hamlet. Master suite, 6 further beds (4 suites), family bath, attic rooms, breakfast/kitchen, 3 receps, utility, WCs, boot room, cellar, attic rooms, car port, barn, summer house, pigsties, pond, gardens, paddocks, 9.62 acres. Still available at £1.195m; Strutt & Parker (01584-873711).



◀ **Surrey:** Cudworth Manor, Dorking. Set in beautiful gardens and grounds of nearly nine acres, this fine moated Grade II manor dates in part to the 16th century. 4 suites, 6 further beds, family bath, shower, breakfast/kitchen, 4 receps, study, snug, pantry, staff kitchen, utility, cloakroom, plant room, wine room, terrace, summer house, paddocks, outbuildings. Was on the market at £2.55m, now under offer; Hamptons International (020-7493 8222).





▲ **Cornwall:** Gingerbread Cottage, Gweek, Helston. On the market for the first time in more than 20 years was this 2-bed former gatehouse to the Trelowarren Estate in a creekside village. It was available in September at OIEO £225,000, and sold in the region of £300,000; Lillicrap Chilcott (01872-273473).

▲ **Wiltshire:** The Walton Canonry, Salisbury. A Georgian house with views over the cathedral and meadows, and with gardens bordering the River Avon. 5 suites, 1 further bed, 3 receps, 2 kitchens, study, office, library, utility, 1-bed guest wing, landscaped garden, workshops, stores, greenhouse, 1.6 acres. Still available, price on application; Savills (01722-426880).



◀ **Worcestershire:**

The Saloon (Apartment 4), Westwood House, Droitwich. A flat in this turreted mansion house, which was an Elizabethan banqueting hall. 2 suites with mezzanine dressing room/study, breakfast/kitchen, grand saloon with bay windows, garages, communal and private gardens. Was on the market for £475,000, still available at the new price of £420,000; Andrew Grant (01905-734735).



◀ **Shropshire:**

Penkridge Hall, Leebotwood, Church Stretton. A restored Grade II* Elizabethan country house, set in 2.25 acres in the heart of the south Shropshire countryside. 4 beds, 2 baths, shower, dining/kitchen, pantry, 2 receps, study, library, cellar, utility, garages, stores, barn, garden, paddock. Was on the market at £735,000, sold for £705,000; Samuel Wood & Company (01743-272710).



◀ **Oxfordshire:**

The Baulk, Goring Heath. A Goring II house in an Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty on Goring Heath, with far-reaching views. Master suite, 6 further beds, family bath, shower, 3 receps, breakfast/kitchen, study, hall, converted barn, car port, terrace, orchard, landscaped knot garden, further gardens, heated swimming pool, pool house, 2.7 acres. Still available at £3.5m; Strutt & Parker (0118-984 5757).



▲ **Ceredigion:** Brynmeheryn, Ystrad Meurig, near Aberystwyth. A Grade II farmhouse with Georgian additions, in an idyllic location with fine views. Master bed, guest suite, 3 further beds, family bath, breakfast/kitchen with pantry, 2 receps, laundry, glass house walkway to studio/gallery, courtyard with outbuildings for conversion, landscaped gardens, woodland, ponds, 111 acres. Still available at £680,000; Savills (02920-368930).

A look at some of the best hot and cold breaks on

Holidays in the winter snow

Skiing, sake and hot spring baths in Japan's northern Alps

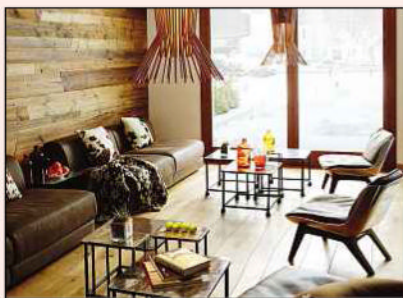
Thanks to their “legendary” powder snow, the ski resorts of Niseko and Furano on Japan’s northern island, Hokkaido, are wildly popular with Australian visitors. But there’s fantastic skiing on the main island of Honshu, too, says Leslie Woit in *The Daily Telegraph*; and, as it sees fewer foreign visitors, its resorts have a unique “cultural X factor” that includes soba noodles and sake, hot spring baths and cheeky snow monkeys. Being further south, the ski season here is a little shorter, and owing to Japan’s economic downturn, the “vast” lift systems have seen better days. But the pistes are marvellously uncrowded, the snow “falls by the metre”, and the great historic sites of Kyoto lie an easy bullet-train-ride away, making it easy to combine skiing with a sightseeing tour of the country.

An hour’s drive from Nagano City – host of the 1998 Winter Olympics – in the heart of the Northern Alps, you’ll find Japan’s “original winter resort”, Myoko, which dates back to 1937.



Accommodation here ranges from “giant purpose-built, slopeside hotels” with toilets that act like showers (“spray, pulse, massage, blow-dry”) and tweet like birds when flushed, to “charming” ryokan inns where tatami mats are unfurled nightly. Rivulets of hot spring water “stream through snowy streets”, hence the “great après-activity” – communal bathing in the *onsen*. Dining options range from hard-boiled-egg dispensers and hole-in-the-wall snack bars to first-class restaurants. Among the other great resorts nearby are Hakuba, which has “more terrain and vertical rise than anywhere else in Japan”; Shiga Kogen (pictured), where there’s a café at 2,037m offering the country’s “highest cup of coffee”; and Nozawa Onsen, a charming, traditional town known for its good (and good-value) food, and surprisingly buzzy nightlife. *Inside Japan* (0117-244 3263, www.insidejapantours.com) has a 13-night Winter Sports and Culture trip from £1,840pp excl. flights.

Discreet luxury in Italy



Nira Montana, La Thuile, Italy

“Tired of overcrowded slopes? Average food? Hordes of Brits?” Then come to La Thuile, says Tatler – and stay at the new Nira Montana, the first-ever five-star hotel in this “charming” little Italian town, which offers easy access to 160km of slopes in the excellent Espace San Bernardo ski area. An unassuming three-storey building in traditional Aosta Valley style, the Nira blends harmoniously with its surroundings (mostly second homes owned by “the Milan and Turin sets”). But the interiors are a study in “pared-back” luxury, with modern design pieces (chrome and leather armchairs, hand-crafted Foscari copper lamps) set off against walls clad with reclaimed timber from local farms. The 55 bedrooms are exceptionally large, with walk-in rain showers and private balconies. The spa has an indoor pool, saunas, hammam and four tranquil treatment rooms, and there’s an “elegant” double-height restaurant, serving superb Italian food. *Doubles from £145 (00 39 0165 883125, www.niramontana.com).*

Kiteskiing in Sweden

It’s the latest hibernal “adrenaline rush” – a fledgling sport that uses the wind to pull you on specialist skis across flat, snowy ground, in a manner similar to kitesurfing. And there’s no better place to learn to “kiteski” than Sweden’s vast Lake Mälaren, near Stockholm, says Graeme Green in *The Sunday Times*. The first day is spent learning to handle the kite itself – 60ft² of material, attached to your waist on a harness – and to use the “killer line”, with which it can be crumpled in an emergency. Putting on skis for the first time on day two, you “jolt forward, struggling for balance” – but everything should soon “click into place”, and you’re off, “racing across the snowy lake”. You’ll probably “crash the kite” quite a bit at first, prompting much Jedi-like advice from your instructor: the key is to “feel it, feel where the wind is, feel when it’s right”. It takes some concentration, but it’s all worth it when you get it right: the “crisp, white world” of the frozen lake becomes your playground – and the rush is “all the better for being nature-powered”. *Lakeside Adventure* (00 46 21 26 100, www.lakesideadventure.se) has two-day kiteskiing courses on Lake Mälaren from £240pp (gear and tuition only).

The Hole’s half-century

Rarely crowded and always cold – “eye-wateringly, finger-achingly cold” – Jackson Hole isn’t noted for the hedonism of its après-ski scene. But this beautiful Wyoming resort, which celebrated its 50th birthday this year, is one of the US’s great

winter destinations, says Pamela Goodman in *House & Garden* – a “genuine Wild West cowboy town” that breeds “an infectious sense of health and wellbeing” in visitors. It has plenty of “impeccably groomed” runs for beginners and intermediates, but for those in search of bigger thrills, it also offers access to some fine extreme terrain; and that area is about to expand, with the launch of a new



chairlift to take skiers up to the exhilarating Craggs area for the first time. There are friendly, unpretentious bars both in Jackson itself and in the slope-side settlement of Teton Village (don’t miss the margaritas at the Mangy Moose), and luxurious accommodation, too (including a Four Seasons hotel and a Zen-like Aman resort). The town is also the gateway to Yellowstone National Park (all but “deserted” by tourists at this time of year), where you can ride a snowmobile through the “exquisite” frozen landscape to the Old Faithful Geyser, which is a “magical” experience. *Scott Dunn* (020-8682 5050, www.scottdunn.com) has a 10-night trip from £1,740pp, incl. flights.

offer this winter, as recommended by top travel writers

Holidays in the winter sun

Island-hopping in faraway Fiji

There are few places on the tourist map where you get a sense of being somewhere “truly different”, says Annabelle Thorpe in *The Times* – but Fiji is one. This Pacific archipelago feels “a long, long way away” from anywhere, though it lies just a short flight from Australia; and while its resorts offer the same sort of “paradise-isle fantasy” as those in the Maldives or Mauritius, it has a tribal culture all of its own. At hotels such as Nanuku, on the main island, guests are treated to kava ceremonies, in which a mildly sedative drink is produced with much ritualised “hand-clapping and eyeballing” by men in grass skirts. But the evidence of deeper traditions is there to see in the neat little villages of prefab houses scattered across the “lush, palm-strewn hills” beyond. Good resorts in the outlying islands – reached by ferry from Denarau – include the “gorgeous” Castaway; the “perfectly manicured” honeymoon escape of Likuliku; and Tokoriki, which is more fun. *Bridge & Wickers* (020-3553 9218, www.bridgeandwickers.co.uk) has a 10-night trip from £4,225pp incl. flights.



Seeking out the soul of old Goa

With its glorious beaches, whitewashed Portuguese churches and colourful villages, Goa is a “heady” marriage of Lusitanian charm and “timeless subcontinental allure”. Since the 1970s, package tourism has dulled its appeal, says Maria Shollenbarger in the *Financial Times*, but there are pockets of paradise still to be found – including a few “beautiful and tasteful boltholes”. Newly opened this year is Ahilya by the Sea, a hotel on a grassy promontory between two small, “tranquil” beaches near the old Portuguese fort of Reis Magos. Its “chic” but comfortable interiors feature a “souk-like” mix of Asian antiques, and its infinity pool and teak terraces offer gorgeous sunset views. More established are Aashyana Lakhanpal, with its “fabulous” traditional *casinhas* set on a quiet section of Candolim beach; and Elsewhere, whose colonial villas and canvas tents stand in glorious isolation between a creek and the ocean near Ashvem beach.

A Brazilian beach odyssey

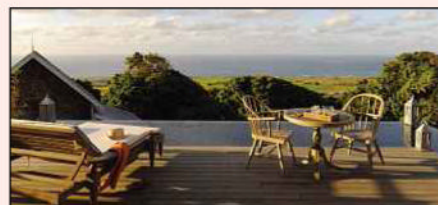
For an adventurous but impeccably cool Brazilian beach holiday far off the beaten track, head to the country’s northeast and the “crumbling” old colonial port of São Luís de Maranhão, says Michelle Jana Chan in *Condé Nast Traveller*. Old men “doze in the shade of mango trees” on its cobbled plazas, as the sound of reggae music drifts past on the “salty” breeze. Go east in a four-wheel drive and you’ll soon reach the “startling” Lençóis Maranhenses, a vast tract of “rippling” coastal dunes where you can swim with turtles in “shimmering” lagoons. Next comes the rainforested Parnaíba river delta, which has islands twice the size of Bermuda and mangroves “the height of skyscrapers” which are home to iguanas and silky anteaters and teeming with monkeys. Finally you reach the kitesurfers’ mecca of Jericoacoara, a place so achingly hip its name is “almost whispered”, but which lies in a national park and consists, as a result, of just five “sandy” streets. Along these, you’ll find pretty pousadas, sophisticated restaurants and even a glamorous new hotel, Essenza, with a 100-metre pool; and beyond them, a beach that stretches for miles, great for quad-biking, riding, capoeira-dancing and more. *Dehouche Travel* (0871-284 7770, www.dehouche.com) has an eight-night trip from £2,260pp incl. flights.



A Caribbean Eden

Belle Mont Farm, St Kitts

St Kitts has long been “a little forgotten island among a bouquet of flashier destinations”, but this resort could turn it into “a Caribbean hotspot”, says Sasha Slater in *Harper’s Bazaar*. Consisting of 84 traditionally built houses set on a 400-acre farm, it is not only beautiful and luxurious, but organic and sustainable. The staff are almost all local, and in the kitchen the executive chef (who is French) makes excellent use of locally sourced ingredients. His “unmissable” creations include conch ceviche, dasheen risotto, and sea-urchin custard. Guest houses have plunge pools and verandas with spectacular views, and there is a gym, a spa and a large swimming pool. *Guest houses from £455pn* (00 1 869 465 7388, www.bellemontfarm.com).



LEISURE

Food & Drink

Drinks to keep you warm this winter

I love winter, says Lizzie Kamenetzky in her new book. Bracing walks in cold, crisp air; the cosiness of the evenings as the night draws in – the perfect excuse to add a dash of rum to your hot chocolate. Here are five simple drink recipes guaranteed to keep you warm over the festive season and beyond

Chocolat chaud

None of that powdered nonsense: a proper hot chocolate is made with pure chocolate melted into rich, creamy milk, with an added tot of something stronger to warm the blood. Serves six

200g dark chocolate, chopped into small pieces
4 mugs of whole milk (about 900ml)
2 tbsp caster sugar
4 tbsp rum, kirsch or brandy (optional)
200ml double cream
1 tbsp icing sugar

- Put the chocolate into a pan with the milk and the caster sugar. Heat very gently until the chocolate has totally dissolved. Add the booze, if you like, then pour into six mugs.
- Whip the cream with the icing sugar, then spoon on top of the hot chocolate. Serve immediately.

Boozy coffee

The perfect coffee to round off a wintery lunch in the mountains. Makes two

450ml hot strong coffee
90ml Frangelico
25ml kirsch
100ml double cream
freshly grated nutmeg

- Mix the coffee with the Frangelico and kirsch, then whisk in 2 tbsp of the cream and pour into two glasses.
- Lightly whip the rest of the cream and dollop on top of the coffee. Grate over a little nutmeg and serve.

Hot toddy

The classic hot toddy is more than just a cure for colds and sniffles

140ml water
140ml whisky
finely grated zest of 1 lemon
2 tsp honey or caster sugar
2 slices fresh ginger, peeled
2 cloves



- Put all the ingredients into a pan and heat together gently until all of the sugar, or honey, dissolves. Strain, pour into cups or glasses, then serve.

Glühwein / Vin chaud

A steaming glass of glühwein is one of the best things about mountain living. Serves 6-8

750ml bottle full-bodied red wine
100ml brandy
1 cinnamon stick
3 cloves
1 star anise
1 orange, sliced
1 lemon, sliced
50-75g

caster sugar, to taste

- Put all the ingredients into a large pan. Add 250ml water. Heat gently until the sugar dissolves. Serve in mugs or glasses.

Spiced Apple Cider

Fruity and full of spices, you will find this slips down very easily. Serves four

600ml medium sweet cider
75ml Calvados or brandy
1 cinnamon stick
1 vanilla pod, halved
small pat of butter

- Put all the booze into a pan with the cinnamon and vanilla. Heat gently until steaming, then whisk in the butter.

Taken from *Winter Cabin Cooking – Dumplings, Fondue, Glühwein and other Fireside Feasts* by Lizzie Kamenetzky published by Ryland Peters & Small at £19.99. To buy from The Week bookshop for £17.99, call 0843-060 0020 or visit www.theweek.co.uk/bookshop.

The best sparkling wines for Christmas and New Year



Christmas isn't Christmas without bubbles, said Jane MacQuitty in The Times. For my money, the best own-label bubbly around this festive season is **Waitrose Brut Champagne, Duval-Leroy** (£19.99). It's bouncy, bold and nutty, and makes a great all-round aperitif, canapé and party buffet fizz. Another great buy is **Lanson Black Label Brut Champagne** (Co-op, £19.99 until 5 January, down from £33.99; Sainsbury's, £20 until 1 January; Tesco, £20 until 29 December). It's "easy-sipping, verdant and yeasty" with vanilla-scented bubbles. If you must buy prosecco (I find most of it bland and too sweet), try the **2014 Taste the Difference Conegliano Prosecco Superiore Brut, Italy** (Sainsbury's, £7.50 bottle, £14.50 magnum, both until 1 January). It's a terrific, light, quince and pear-stashed wine with only 10.5% abv. "Worth the price asked."

If you're in the mood for splashing out, consider Winston Churchill's favoured **Pol Roger**, said David Williams in The Observer. Each of their champagnes is reliably excellent, whether it's the "majestic" prestige cuvée named after the ex-PM, the rich toasty current vintage release, or the always delightful non-vintage



blend **Pol Roger Brut Reserve Champagne NV** (Waitrose, £32.79 until 6 January, down from £40.99). If you're after cheaper options, I would go for Co-op's **Les Pionniers Champagne NV** (£16.99). This tried-and-tested blend is, in my opinion, the best supermarket own-label champagne available – "fabulous value and wonderfully rich and biscuity with incisive acidity". Alternatively, for a great lower-alcohol sparkling wine, try **GiBo Asti Spumante NV** (Marks & Spencer, £9; 4.5% abv). It is made from muscato, has the grapey character of a ripe muscato and goes beautifully with fruit-based desserts.

My big advice this year is to look to English growers for top-quality fizz, said Jancis Robinson in the FT. I recently took part in a "revelatory" blind-tasting of eight popular champagnes and four English sparkling wines, as part of a panel which included several French sommeliers. To our astonishment, the two top-highest scorers were both produced in England: **Hambleton Classic Cuvée NV England** (www.hambletonvineyard.co.uk, £28.50) and **Nyetimber Classic Cuvée 2010 England** (Hennings, £23.99, was £29.99). However, my favourite of the lot was the **Wiston Estate Cuvée 2010** (www.wistonestate.com, £32.95).



*Africa / Arabian Gulf / Asia / Australasia / The Americas (Canada, South America, USA) / Caribbean & Mexico
Europe / Indian Ocean / Luxury Villas, Yachts & Private Islands / Luxury Cruise / Luxury Ski / Space Travel*

Elegant Resorts

Exclusively Elegant Travel since 1988



Book with Elegant Resorts, the UK's leading luxury tour operator, for exclusive itineraries and experiences to the Indian Ocean. Jumeirah Dhevanfushi, Maldives, is an exotic hideaway set over two distinct locations - the Main Resort Island and The Ocean Pearls. Both resort areas feature stunning one and two-bedroom villas with private swimming pool, direct beach or lagoon access and a host of first-class facilities to reinvigorate and relax.

Stay 7 nights in a Beach Revive, including breakfast, a 30% rate reduction, an exclusive Sunken Dig Dinner, economy flights, shared plane and speedboat transfers & UK lounge passes. From £3,495 p.p. Saving £1,900 per couple.

01244 897 501



elegantresorts.co.uk




Elegant Resorts Ltd, registered office: Elegant House, Sandpiper Way, Chester CH4 9QE. ATOL protected 2885, ABTA V1712



PLAN YOUR GREAT Escape

on the ultimate snow and ice driving adventure to Iceland with Land Rover

LAND-ROVER ADVENTURE TRAVEL BY Abercrombie & Kent



PLAN YOUR GREAT DRIVING ESCAPE
abercrombiekent.co.uk/landrover | 01242 547 898

ROMANTIC RIVIERA RETREAT



www.ilvalico.eu
vitosmi@gmail.com

MALLORCA



Charming finca
3 Double bedrooms
Air-conditioning
Pool & exotic garden
Stunning setting
01494 837292
www.richardhall.net

GLEWSTONE COURT



ICONIC GEORGIAN MANOR
HOUSE IN THE HEREFORDSHIRE
COUNTRYSIDE

EXCLUSIVE USE | WEDDINGS
PRIVATE PARTIES | CONFERENCES
PROFESSIONAL & FRIENDLY
SERVICE | FAMILY OWNED & RUN

Tel: 01989 770367 | info@glewstonecourt.com

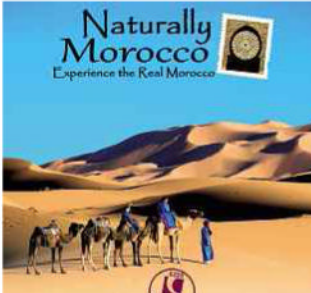
Drôme Provençale, France



Beautifully restored farmhouse
6 bedrooms
Pool & lovely garden
Wonderful region

Tel: 07815811743 www.ownersdirect.co.uk Ref:FR9025

Naturally Morocco
Experience the Real Morocco



Tailored holidays to
beautiful medina cities,
mountains, deserts & coasts
01239 710814
naturallymorocco.co.uk

ULTIMATE GAP YEAR EXPERIENCE
SKI & SNOWBOARD COURSES



www.skilegap.com
020 7731 5432

YSE
Val d'Isère



Val d'Isère, exclusively
20 chalets, gourmet food, just five hours
from Gatwick on our Sunday 10am flight
www.yeski.co.uk 01935 816550

Chateau de la Motte



Burgundy/Champagne Border
Lovely moated chateau, sleeps 14-17. Hard tennis court,
heated pool and fishing Golf, watersports 10 minutes.
Calais 3 1/2 hours in 17 acres with streamers, a river and lake.

www.ChateaudelaMotte.co.uk Telephone 01225 310 822

Dali's CADAQUÉS



Fabulous villa overlooking the Mediterranean
Situated above the centre of this vibrant and historic town, much loved by artists and musicians. It's many bars, restaurants and beaches a 5 minute walk from the house.
Set in beautiful tranquil garden with private pool. Spring walking in the Natural Park.
Sleeps 9, Housekeeper 5 mornings. 2.5 hrs North of Barcelona : 1 hr from Girona Airport.
Still some availability for 2016
www.espuigcadaques.com espuigcadaques@gmail.com tel : +44 7778811501

AWARD-WINNING BESPOKE TRAVEL WORLDWIDE



SAVE £250pp
on your first booking
T&CS APPLY

The Ultimate TRAVEL COMPANY
Call 0203 603 6653
theultimatetravelcompany.co.uk

The best... skiing equipment



◀ Salomon MTN Lab Helmet

Weighing just 300g, this helmet meets the safety standards for both alpine skiing and mountaineering. It has a washable, comfortable merino-wool lining, and vents at the front to help keep you cool (£110; www.skatepro.uk).



▼ Black Diamond Dawn Patrol 15 backpack

This lightweight (1kg) backpack has a capacity of 15 litres. Designed to hug your body, it gives quick access to your gear – and it's compatible with Black Diamond's AvaLung Element, which supplies fresh air in the event of an avalanche (£59; www.snowinn.com).



▲ Atomic Vantage 100 CTI skis

Highly rated by ski magazines, these are excellent, all-mountain men's skis. They're light, with a wood core and titanium insert. A version for women is also available (£366; www.snowinn.com).



▲ Leki Little Beetle Zap mittens

These children's gloves are lined with Soft-Tex. Thanks to a long zip along the edge, they can open wide, making them very easy to get on and off (£30; www.leki.com).

▶ The North Face Modulator ABS

One for serious skiers, this dual-airbag system is designed to protect the wearer in an avalanche. It weighs about 2kg and is compatible with almost all backpacks for off-piste skiing (£460; www.trekinn.com).



▲ Julbo Aerospace goggles These ingenious goggles have lenses that can be set forward to let in air, to stop them fogging up. Though specifically designed for ski touring (which involves trekking up mountains), they're suitable for all types of skiing (£135; www.ekosport.co.uk).

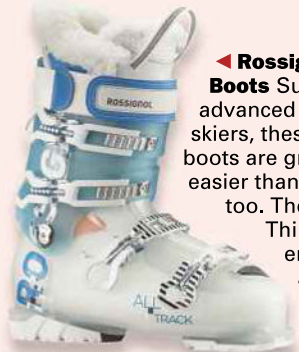
▼ Arc'teryx Lithic gloves

Made from two types of Gore-Tex, these ultra-waterproof gloves keep your hands dry and warm, while giving you a great grip. The seams are both taped and stitched, to help stop any moisture getting in (£185; www.arcteryx.com).



◀ Rossignol Alltrack 80 Boots

Suitable for advanced and expert skiers, these women's boots are great on piste, and easier than some to walk in, too. The OptiSensor 3D Thinsulate lining ensures comfort and warmth (£160; www.skatepro.uk).



Tips of the week... how to become a better skier

- Update your ski boots if they're more than five years old, or have been used for more than about 100 days of skiing. You might want to get new skis too, as they will have more bounce and grip than old ones.
- Work on your fitness in the month leading up to your holiday. Focus on strengthening the key areas for skiing – your legs and core.
- Start gently. Skiing in powder (deep snow not yet skied on) is much riskier, so it's a good idea to avoid it on the first day, even if you're an experienced skier.
- To improve your technique, dedicate some of your skiing time to doing drills. Try edging drills, upper and lower-body separation drills, and making short and long-radius turns. If you haven't done them before, watch guides online in advance.
- Be careful not to overdo it the night before: alcohol exacerbates symptoms of altitude sickness, such as headaches and nausea, so it can cause problems on the slopes the next day.

SOURCE: OUTSIDE ONLINE

And for those who have everything...



Pringle's bespoke service allows you to design your own Argyle cashmere sweater; you choose everything from the colour of the diamonds to the neck trim, and if you want it even further "personalised", you can have your initials printed on it too.

£995;

www.pringledeconstructed.com

SOURCE: THE DAILY TELEGRAPH

Where to find... affordable ski chalets

Chalet Angela, in the Austrian village of Obergurgl, is just four minutes from the nearest ski lift. There are four bedrooms, floor-to-ceiling windows and a split-level living room with masses of space for lounging (from £518pp for a week, incl. flights and board; www.skitotal.com).

Chalet de Sole, in the French resort of Morzine, has a "delightful, quirky feel": there's an *Alice in Wonderland*-themed bunkroom for younger guests (from £2,480 for ten; www.canapyandstars.co.uk).

Ideal for large groups, **Chalet Mara** in Kaprun, Austria, sleeps up to 25 (you can also book it by the room). It's furnished in the traditional Austrian style (from £307 incl. flights and board; www.crystalski.co.uk).

Chalet Bouc Blanc in France's Les Arcs is incredibly well located; 50 metres from a chairlift and 400 metres from the ski school. Sleeping nine, it has "classically Alpine" bedrooms and a "cosy" lounge (from £499 incl. flights and board; www.skibeat.co.uk).

SOURCE: THE TIMES

Villa De La Verne



A million miles from the real world, just 20 minutes from St Tropez

For prices and availability please contact us at stay@villadelaverne.com

Larkbeare Grange
luxury B&B
East Devon

01404 822 069 stay@larkbeare.net
www.larkbeare.net

**Bespoke holidays
in Italy.**

Villas, hotels &
tailor made trips
from the Italian expert

www.merriioncharles.com



We've selected and approved 50 of the best independently owned luxury hotels and spas around Britain for you to enjoy. Share the luxury by sending someone special a Pride of Britain Gift Voucher.

To order gift vouchers or your free hotel directory call
FREEPHONE 0800 278 4573
or visit us online at
www.prideofbritainhotels.com



#AvoidBaggageCheckIn

**THE PERFECT IN-FLIGHT
CARRY-ON BAG**

MAKE IT YOUR OWN
Personalise with initials or your company logo

STRESS-FREE SPEEDY BOARDING

Zip-Off Laptop bag for stowing under seat for take-off & landing

20% OFF
Enter Discount Code 'week' www.gate8-luggage.co.uk

www.GATE8-luggage.co.uk

**Get more sunshine in 2016
MASLOW solar energy storage**

✓ save £200 a year

✓ special offer £1995
£295 deposit now
(ex Vat and Install. Terms & Conditions apply)

www.meetmaslow.com/offer

RAGLEY HALL
ALCESTER, WARWICKSHIRE B49 5NJ

THE GAME FAIR
FESTIVAL OF THE GREAT BRITISH COUNTRYSIDE

EARLY BIRD OFFER:
book now to get your tickets for only

£17.50

29-31 JULY 2016

visit our website: www.thegamefair.org

call our early bird ticket hotline: **0844 776 77 77**

A “dovish hike” still carries risks

Larry Elliott

The Guardian

Throughout the year, the US Federal Reserve has shown “Hamlet-like indecision” in weighing up the pros and cons of raising interest rates, says Larry Elliott. Now “the die is cast”: rates have been hiked by a quarter point, to 0.25%-0.5%. Wall Street took the decision in its stride, and no wonder. “This has been one of the best flagged interest rate decisions in history.” The Fed’s “emollient language” was exactly what traders had expected. This was a “dovish hike”; the key word in the statement was “gradual”. The Fed’s forecast suggests that there will be further increases next year “but these will be modest and intermittent”. Some analysts have argued that the Fed shouldn’t be raising at all. Apart from possible repercussions in emerging markets, the US economy “is not very strong” and there’s a risk to consumer and business confidence. In truth, though, “the Fed had boxed itself in”. Having dropped hints that rates would rise in September – and then got cold feet – “it could not have led the markets on a second time without damaging its credibility”. This time, doing nothing would have spooked the markets more than a rate rise.

The world needn’t follow the Fed

Editorial

Financial Times

Central bankers around the world were watching the Fed closely, says the FT. Last week’s interest rate hike poses “immediate challenges” to emerging markets such as China, whose currencies still have some kind of target against the US dollar. But it may well help central banks in Japan and Europe: a widening of interest rate differentials with the US, increasing the chance of further currency depreciation, should make their task of boosting weak economies slightly easier. “The impact is more ambiguous for the Bank of England.” Having embarked on QE early, and been “rewarded with steady growth”, its position is now “closer to the Fed’s”. Yet there are good reasons for not following suit on interest rates now. “Weak global growth may affect an open economy like the UK more than the US.” The reality is that “the synchronised global economic cycles of past decades are not repeating themselves”. Policymaking should reflect that. A raise in US rates just before Christmas may sound like the birth of a new era. “But for wise central banks, an event long prophesied is not a star they should find themselves compelled to follow.”

There’s still life in old King Coal

Marcus Leroux

The Times

There were smiles and songs as 450 miners ended their final shift at Britain’s last deep coal mine at Kellingley in North Yorkshire last week, says Marcus Leroux. Coincidentally, the International Energy Agency announced that demand for coal globally has fallen for the first time since the 1990s, and posited the possibility that Chinese demand has peaked. Yet even on the “highly optimistic assumption” that governments actually deliver on their environmental pledges, the IEA still expects “the world to burn twice as much coal in 2040 as it did in 2000”. It might be “synonymous with a vanished world” in many developed economies, but coal now plays nearly as important a role in Asia’s emerging economies as it once did in Britain. This makes it all the more puzzling that the Government has scrapped £1bn of funding for carbon capture and storage – “an area where Britain could have led the world while helping to keep a lid on emissions”. The Government’s approach “amounts to closing its eyes and hoping coal will go away” – but there’s life yet in old King Coal.

Thatcher’s handbags and glad rags

Editorial

The Economist

Buyers from as far afield as South Korea, Switzerland and Bermuda flocked to Christie’s for the auction of an “eclectic set of items” from the estate of the late Baroness Thatcher of Kesteven, says *The Economist*. “There were brooches, books, pictures, letters and papers”, and, inevitably, handbags. But Mrs Thatcher was “a political power-dresser”, and what really stood out were the clothes. As well as her wedding dress, which went for £25,000, the outfits included one she is believed to have worn to address the House of Commons for the last time as PM in November 1990. Had Mrs Thatcher been a US president, most of this stuff, including the famous handbags, would have ended up in a “lavish” presidential library. “Yet there is something appropriate about a free-market sale of personal effects left by a leader who did so much to pioneer privatisation.” And we are unlikely to see a repeat of this any time soon. “It is hard to see huge popular demand for David Cameron’s suits and ties, Tony Blair’s books – or anything at all linked to John Major.”

City profiles

Christine Lagarde

The IMF chief faces an uneasy new year, says Kim Willsher in *The Guardian*: she is to stand trial in France in connection with a €403m payment made by the French finance ministry to the businessman Bernard Tapie in 2008. Tapie, a politician and former pop star, accused the (formerly state-owned) French bank Crédit Lyonnais of purposely undervaluing his stake in Adidas when it was sold in 1993. French detectives have long been probing whether Nicolas Sarkozy offered Tapie a compensation deal in return for his support in the 2007 presidential election. Lagarde, then Sarkozy’s finance minister, signed off the payment. Lagarde’s term as IMF chief ends in July, but she has suggested that she would seek a second mandate. The unwelcome return of the Tapie case could scupper that.

Lars Windhorst



Someone to keep an eye on in 2016 is Lars Windhorst, 39, the “wunderkind” German financier, says the FT. At 19, he planned to build a tower in Ho Chi Minh City, Vietnam, but, following “spectacular flameouts”, was declared bankrupt and received a suspended prison sentence. Now he’s trying to rebuild his reputation in the City. Windhorst’s investment company, Sapinda, has attracted “a coterie of big-name asset managers”, including L&G and Fidelity. Lord Mandelson sits on the advisory board. Yet both supporters and detractors often ask: “Where does the money come from?” In his “quest for redemption”, the “irrepressible” Windhorst – a lavish party host – bigs up his money, connections and social standing. “Now he has to show results.”




Turtle Doves
 CASHMERE • HANDMADE IN BRITAIN

Recycled Cashmere Accessories from £20

Including fingerless gloves, scarves, snoods, ponchos, hats, babywear, throws & more...

10% Off when you become a 'Friend of Turtle Doves' online

www.turtle-doves.co.uk



GREAT BRITISH DESIGN
 THAT DOESN'T COST THE EARTH

TRUSTPILOT ★★★★★



Join the quest for knowledge!

Children will love receiving **AQUILA Magazine** in the post every month.

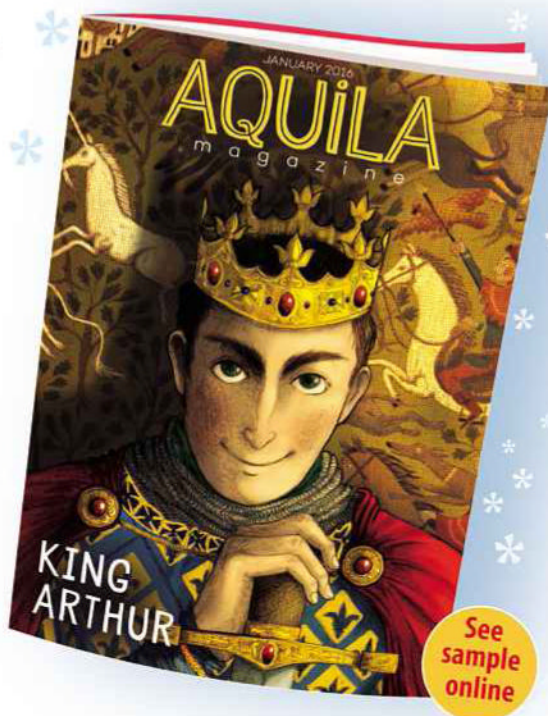
This exuberant and inspiring publication is designed to capture young readers' interest in all aspects of **Science, Arts and General Knowledge**. Ideal for 8 – 12 year olds, it tackles serious educational topics with humour and intelligence, encouraging children to think creatively and ask questions about the world. **AQUILA** also includes articles on philosophy and well-being that will foster a balanced take on life.



- ✓ New topic every month
- ✓ Nourishes bright minds
- ✓ Quality reading

A brilliant birthday gift

If you order a subscription as a birthday gift we can post the first issue to arrive in time for the special day, along with your gift message.



January Issue

AQUILA explores the legend of brave King Arthur and his gallant Knights of the Round Table.

Children can find out why you should never, ever, trust a green knight; conjure a cloud inside a bottle; and create their own Excalibur (for strictly ornamental purposes, obviously!).

aquila.co.uk Tel: 01323 431313

The winners and losers of 2015

A round-up of some of the best – and worst – investments of the year

Winners

The US dollar

It was “the year of the dollar”, say Michael B. Sauter and Thomas C. Frohlich on 24/7 Wall St. In 2015, the greenback rose relative to nearly every other currency. The dollar strengthened partly because other currencies weakened, but the long-signalled US interest rate hike – at a time when other major economies including Japan and Europe were “still actively engaging in quantitative easing” – played a big part too. The dollar was up 10% against the euro and up 13% against the pound this year.

Tech stocks

The biggest paper gains were made by “unicorns” (unlisted billion-dollar-plus tech companies) – notably “disrupters” such as Airbnb and Uber. But a few tech companies “killed it on the public markets” too, says Fitz Tepper on TechCrunch.com. Microsoft is “finally back on track”, having gained about 20%; Facebook is up 34%; and Alphabet (Google) is up by more than 40%. The biggest winner was Netflix: the video streamer’s value spiked by more than 145%.

UK housebuilders

It was a bad year for the resources-heavy FTSE 100, which lost some 8% of its value. But “plenty of shares made investors money”, says Kyle Caldwell in The Daily Telegraph. According to Hargreaves Lansdown, 58 FTSE 100 shares made a positive return in 2015, with companies that derive more of their profits from the UK faring best. Housebuilders had a good year. Taylor Wimpey (up 46%) is this year’s biggest FTSE 100 riser. Barratt Developments (up 32%) and Persimmon (up 24%) also made the top ten.



Netflix: shares up by 145%

Losers

Commodities

Betting on commodities has been “largely unprofitable” in 2015, says 24/7 Wall St. The S&P GSCI – a widely tracked index – is down almost 33% so far this year. Even that somewhat understates the turmoil. In the latter half of the year, commodity-related industries took a pasting owing to concerns over China’s slowing economy, says Heather Ferguson on MindfulMoney.co.uk. The FTSE 100’s two worst performers were miners Anglo American, down 75%; and Glencore, down 71%. Most metal prices slumped in line with the oil price, which fell 30% in 2015 to an 11-year low below \$40. Of the few reported gains, cocoa performed the best, returning more than 18%.

South American currencies

The commodities bust had a huge impact, says 24/7 Wall St. Both the Brazilian real and the Colombian peso lost more than 25% of their value against the US dollar. The worst hit, though, was the Venezuelan bolivar, which is not officially traded. Bloomberg reports that the black market exchange rate for the bolivar versus the dollar has declined by more than 85% this year.

Hedge funds

What was supposed to be a “comeback year” for hedge funds has proved a disaster for many, says Miles Johnson in the FT. “Wrongfooted by central banks and sudden bouts of market volatility”, some of the world’s best-known hedge fund managers, including Bill Ackman and David Einhorn, suffered “stinging losses”. Other large funds, such as Mike Novogratz’s Fortress Macro Fund, “have closed down altogether”.

Trends: the good, the bad and the ugly

● Japan and Europe

With the US stock market broadly flat, and the FTSE going backwards, some of the best gains in established economies in 2015 were found in Japan and Europe – both still buoyed by QE cash. The Nikkei has returned around 11%; European markets are broadly up by around 8%. Good stock-picking, however, counted for a lot, said Kyle Caldwell in The Daily Telegraph. The top-performing Japanese-focused fund, Legg Mason Japan Equity, is up 43%. In Europe, Man GLG Continental European Growth led the pack, rising 27% on the back of top bets including Ryanair. The adage that small is beautiful counted in both Britain and continental Europe, where small firms benefited from the ongoing recovery, while larger, globalised companies struggled. The best-performing major UK fund is Standard Life Investments UK Smaller Companies, which jumped about 26% in 2015.

● Golden memories

Market mayhem did nothing to improve the fortunes of gold, which, like other precious



metals, struggled in 2015. The “yellow metal” is down significantly this year – hitting a new six-year low of \$1,049 after the US interest rate rise. Four years ago, it was trading at around \$1,800. “Gold bugs” are pinning their hopes on a bounce, but the outlook isn’t great, says The Wall Street Journal. Traders fear the return to rising rates will continue to cut demand.

● The name’s bond...

Back in May, a dramatic “flash crash” in German bonds was seen as the harbinger of a disorderly sell-off in the government bond market. That was the dog that didn’t bark in 2015. But bonds are in the spotlight once again, says Gillian Tett in the FT. As the US Treasury notes: “credit risk in the US non-financial business sector is elevated and rising”. In the week following the closing of two high-yield junk bond funds, the market has been hit with a record wave of redemptions: investors pulled \$5.1bn from funds holding investment-grade bonds – the biggest withdrawal since 1992. Make no mistake, says John Stepek on Moneyweek.com, “bond investors are edgy”.

Best fund managers

“Some managers perform consistently well over the longer term, no matter which way the wind is blowing,” says Eleanor Lawrie in the Daily Mail. Here are the top four from Tilney Bestinvest’s 2015 list:

1. Angus Tulloch, First State Investments. A long-standing investor in emerging markets, Tulloch has outperformed in 50% of months over a five-year period. He’s “a very cautious manager” says Bestinvest, and has weathered stormy Asian markets far better than the competition.

2. Giles Hargreave, Hargreave Hale (Marlborough Funds). “A no-nonsense investor whose forte is UK smaller companies.” His rating also reflects his record on Marlborough’s UK Micro-Cap Growth and Nano-Cap Growth funds.

3. Mark Slater, Slater Investments. The Slater MFM Growth fund has raced ahead of the FTSE-All-Share in the past five years, with a return of 209.2% against the index’s 141.1%.

4. Neil Woodford, Woodford IM. The star manager has shot up from 23rd place last year, reflecting the success of his new venture: his equity income fund has grown to £7bn, and he launched his Patient Capital Trust.

It was a year of market mayhem and metal meltdown, in

JANUARY

The new year gets off to a choppy start. The FTSE 100 records the worst first Monday of the year on record, falling 2% in response to fears that the anti-austerity party, **Syriza**, could win the Greek general election and trigger a disorderly exit from the eurozone. A precipitous 7% fall in the price of **copper** is blamed on Chinese hedge funds. The sudden Christmas collapse of parcel delivery firm **City Link** – owned by Jon Moulton's firm Better Capital – leads to a post-mortem about the dangers of private equity ownership. The Swiss National Bank's sudden decision to remove the Swiss franc's long-standing cap against the euro sees forex dealers take heavy losses in the ensuing "**francogeddon**". To stimulate Europe's economy, European Central Bank president **Mario Draghi** launches a €1.1trn quantitative easing "bazooka". But it's a good month for **Apple**, which chalks up a quarterly profit of \$18bn, the largest in corporate history.

FEBRUARY

Greece's new **Syriza** government tries to renegotiate the country's €245bn bailout, leading to acrimonious exchanges with eurozone creditors. Greek PM **Alexis Tsipras** and his "rock star" finance minister, **Yanis Varoufakis**, threaten to look to Russia for economic support. But stock markets are unfazed: the FTSE 100 hits a new all-time high of 6,958, surpassing the previous record set in 1999. The auction of **Premier League TV rights** raises a record £5.12bn: Sky and BT pay nearly double the rate paid at the previous auction in 2012. Leaked documents reveal "industrial-scale" tax evasion at **HSBC's Swiss Private Bank**, involving 7,000 British clients. **Petrobras** CEO Maria das Graças Foster resigns – the latest scalp in the widening **Lava Jato** (car wash) bribery and corruption scandal engulfing the Brazilian oil giant. In a *Newsnight* interview, shadow chancellor **Ed Balls** cannot name a single Labour business supporter, except for "Bill" (Bill Thomas, a board member of The Co-operative Bank).

MARCH

Sir **Martin Sorrell**, CEO of advertising giant **WPP**, describes the coming UK election as a "Morton's fork": a no-win choice between a Tory party uncertain over Europe and a Labour Party intent on "bashing business". The **East Coast rail line** to Scotland – run by the state since 2009 – is transferred to a Virgin-branded consortium 90% owned by **Stagcoach**. The Chancellor delivers the

last **Budget** before the election: a hike in the bank levy – a tax on bank balance sheets, introduced in 2010 – falls particularly hard on **HSBC**. Britain's decision to join the China-led **Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank (AIIB)** causes a diplomatic spat with Washington, which is aggrieved by



London's "constant accommodation of the Chinese". Sir Philip Green sells **BHS** to an unknown consortium called Retail Acquisitions for £1. **Katherine Garrett-Cox** (above), chief exec of underperforming Dundee investment house Alliance Trust, comes under fire from activist investor Elliott Advisors. **Heinz** – owned by the Brazilian firm 3G Capital and Warren Buffett's Berkshire Hathaway – announces a \$100bn merger with **Kraft**.

APRIL

The pensions industry takes on hundreds of extra staff to cope with **Pensions Freedom Day**, when the "bonfire of regulations" on retirement finances begins. **Shell** agrees a £54bn mega-merger with **BG Group**. **Tesco** caps a disastrous financial year with a £6.4bn loss, the worst performance in its history. **Volkswagen** chairman and founding family patriarch Ferdinand Piech resigns following a "Wagnerian" boardroom feud with CEO Martin Winterkorn. Navinder Singh Sarao, a trader from west London, is arrested; US authorities accuse the "**Hound of Hounslow**" (below) of causing a huge Wall Street "flash crash" in 2010. **HSBC** announces a review of its UK domicile, viewed as "a warning shot" against the banking levy; it considers a return to Hong Kong. **Twitter** loses a quarter of its market value in a single day after poor results. The **pound**, assailed by election jitters, falls to a five-year low against the dollar.

MAY

The surprise Tory election victory sparks a "relief rally" in the City. **Sajid Javid**, a former investment banker, is named **Business**

Secretary. The latest figures reveal that Britain has slipped into **deflation** for the first time since 1960: CPI inflation has declined by 0.1% in April. The online gaming group **888** tables a takeover bid for its rival **Bwin.party** – a big consolidation is in train in the betting industry. An inquest into the deaths of two children from carbon monoxide poisoning in a Corfu hotel in 2006 finds that **Thomas Cook** "breached its duty of care". The tour operator is slammed for its "inhuman" treatment of the family. Six global banks pay a collective \$5.6bn in fines for illegally **rigging foreign exchange markets**. No individual faces criminal charges. Following an outcry over tax avoidance, **Amazon** starts paying corporation tax in Britain: UK sales will be booked in London rather than Luxembourg.

JUNE

Investors brace themselves for volatility as Greece's latest debt repayment deadline draws closer. The **FTSE 100** falls to a five-month low. **Twitter** CEO Dick Costolo quits; he will be replaced by the returning co-founder Jack Dorsey. The Murdoch family (below) consolidate their hold over **21st Century Fox**: James Murdoch becomes CEO, and his brother Lachlan is made co-chairman. In its latest financing round, **Uber**, the disruptive taxi-booking app, is valued at \$50bn. It is the most prominent example of a "unicorn" – the new breed of privately held tech firms worth €1bn-plus. The Italian chocolatier



Ferrero Rocher buys **Thorntons** for £112m. China's high-octane stock markets (up 150% in a year) suffer a big wobble, tumbling 13%. Beijing's efforts to cool the market by cracking down on margin trading (borrowing to buy stock) fail to have an effect. In his **Mansion House** speech, the Chancellor signals an end to "bank-bashing" and outlines new legislation that would compel future governments to run a budget surplus in "normal" economic circumstances.

JULY

Greece's failure to make a €1.6bn IMF repayment thrusts the **eurozone** into crisis. The ECB stops funding Greek



which we waited with bated breath for an interest rate rise

banks, and capital controls are imposed. In a hastily called referendum, 61% of **Greek voters** reject the bailout terms. But under threat of ejection from the eurozone, the Greek parliament votes through austerity measures. In his second **Budget** of the year, George Osborne announces a new National Living Wage and controversial cuts to tax credits. He also reduces the bank levy. Chinese stock markets suffer more steep falls: the **Shanghai Composite Index** has lost more than 20% since its mid-June peak. **Financial Times** owner Pearson sells the newspaper to Japan's Nikkei for £844m, to concentrate on its core education business. Antony Jenkins is "brutally" ousted as CEO of **Barclays**



by new chairman John McFarlane. A massive ¥152bn (£780m) accounting scandal at **Toshiba** forces the resignation of chief executive Hisao Tanaka.

AUGUST

The ferocious sell-off in global markets continues, exacerbated by the biggest one-off devaluation of the Chinese yuan in 20 years. Beijing's moves to settle the stock market fail to stop another plunge on "**Black Monday**". The refugee crisis in Calais has a "devastating" effect on the UK's road freight industry, as police shut down roads to "stack" queuing lorries. The Treasury stages the first sale of **RBS's** shares since its 2008 rescue: a 5.4% stake is sold to institutional investors at a £1bn loss. **Tom Hayes**, a former UBS and Citigroup derivatives trader, is jailed for 14 years for conspiracy to defraud by manipulating Libor lending rates. **Google** undergoes a massive restructuring; the group will henceforth be called Alphabet. Pearson sells its 50% stake in **The Economist** for £469m. **Berry Bros & Rudd**, the 317-year-old vintners, hire Tesco's head of wine-buying, Dan Jago, to restore its fortunes. US airlines **Delta** and **American Airlines** announce a ban on shipping big-game trophies following the shooting of Cecil, a Zimbabwean lion, by a US dentist.

SEPTEMBER

The IMF and the World Bank urges US Fed chair **Janet Yellen** (below) to delay a mooted interest rate rise, or risk "panic" in emerging markets. She heeds the warning. **Oil prices** below \$50/barrel continue to take their toll: 65,000 jobs have been lost in the North Sea. **Investec** warns that the troubled commodities giant **Glencore** could be wiped out completely unless prices recover. Some €25bn is slashed from the value of **Volkswagen**, after the German carmaker is found to have installed "defeat devices" in its diesel cars to falsify emissions data. CEO Martin Winterkorn is replaced by Porsche chief Matthias Müller. **Aga Rangemaster** is sold to Middleby, a Chicago-based industrial ovens empire, for £129m. **Rebekah Brooks** announces her return to News Corp, as chief executive of News UK. **Tesco** offloads its South Korean division, Homeplus, for £4.2bn. **John McDonnell** becomes shadow chancellor, following the election of Jeremy Corbyn as Labour leader. His hobbies, listed in *Who's Who*, include "fermenting [sic] the overthrow of capitalism".

OCTOBER

The state visit of Chinese President Xi Jinping coincides with a growing crisis in the UK steel industry. Thousands of jobs are lost following the closure of **SSI** and **Tata Steel** plants in Redcar and Scunthorpe – blamed on Chinese exporters dumping cheap steel. The **China General Nuclear Power Corporation** acquires a one-third stake in the new £24bn nuclear power station at Hinkley Point. Twelve Pacific Rim nations, including the US, sign the **Trans-Pacific Partnership (TPP)** – the biggest global trade deal for decades. It is viewed as the "economic backbone" of President Obama's "pivot" towards Asia. The world's two largest brewers, **Anheuser-Busch InBev** and **SABMiller**, agree a £68bn deal to create a global beer behemoth, dubbed Megabrew. The Chancellor announces that £2bn of shares in **Lloyds Banking Group** will be sold to small investors next spring. **Barclays** names an American, JP

Morgan veteran Jes Staley, as chief executive. **Ferrari** floats successfully in Milan. The telecoms firm **TalkTalk** suffers a "significant and sustained" cyberattack affecting four million customers – its third major attack this year. City hedge fund grandees are reported to be flocking to join EU "out" campaigns.

NOVEMBER

The Bank of England appears to change course on **interest rates**, signalling that the hike could be delayed until as late as



2017. The IMF adds the **Chinese yuan** to its basket of reserve currencies. **Shell** reports a \$7.4bn quarterly loss, the largest in its history, largely due to plunging prices and the halting of major projects. Banks including Standard Chartered, Deutsche Bank, Barclays and RBS announce thousands of job losses in a "**bonfire of the bankers**". **Barclays** is fined £72m by the Financial Conduct Authority for its failure to carry out checks on "politically exposed persons" when facilitating a £1.9bn "elephant deal" with Middle Eastern clients in 2011. **Amazon** opens its first bricks-and-mortar shop, in its home city of Seattle. **Pfizer**, the US drug giant, strikes a \$160bn deal to buy Dublin-based Allergan, uniting Viagra with Botox in the largest US "tax inversion" deal to date. A third of the value of the Brazilian investment bank BTG Pactual is wiped out when its founder, André Esteves, is arrested in the **Petrobras** probe.

DECEMBER

Facebook founder **Mark Zuckerberg** pledges to give away 99% of his company shares, worth some \$45bn, to mark the birth of his daughter. Online spending on **Black Friday** in Britain grows by more than a third, but the event is deemed a "flop" on the high street. The FTSE 100 is badly knocked by a further rout in mining shares. Britain's four big miners – **Anglo American**, **BHP Billiton**, **Glencore** and **Rio Tinto** – have halved in value since February. The oil price falls below \$40/barrel, to an 11-year low. The former PM Gordon Brown joins the advisory board of bond trader **Pimco**. The Government delays a decision on whether to expand **Heathrow** or Gatwick until next year. In a landmark step, the **US Federal Reserve** raises interest rates for the first time since 2006 – by a quarter of a percentage point, to 0.25%-0.5%. Given the move comes amid lacklustre global growth, it is viewed as an "historical gamble" for Fed chair Janet Yellen.



Sterling Silver Cutlery
7 piece place sets £795
45 designs



cutlery.uk.com 01946 725 725
LINCOLN HOUSE - FINE CUTLERY SINCE 1967

PSYCHIATRY-UK
THE CHARITIES IN LONDON TRUST FOR PSYCHOTHERAPY

Do you need to get some help?
Immediate, discreet and economic
on-line access to top specialist doctors.

0330 124 1980
support@psychiatry-uk.com

www.psychiatry-uk.com

Trip the Light
Fantastic with
our fabulous
lampshades



samarkanddesign.com



Ruffs
ESTD 1904

TEL: 01489 578867
WWW.RUFFS.CO.UK



Who will pamper your pets, secure
your home, baffle the burglars and
reduce your insurance premium?

Homesitters®
We stay while you're away

Your home stays **safe**
while you're away

To book, or for a brochure call **01296 630 730**
or visit **www.homesitters.co.uk**

Organise-Us
simplify your life
www.organise-us.com



**Annual sale starts on
Boxing Day!**

A range of beautiful stationery and
leathergoods, Made in England.

Telephone: 01252 781878
Email: info@organise-us.com

Plantation SHUTTERS
Est. 1982 UK's leading shutters specialist


020 8871 9222

SALE
Up to 20% off
on selected materials



info@plantation-shutters.co.uk
www.plantation-shutters.co.uk

ROMI BEHRENS
For the Love of Painting



The Gallery 54 Shepherd Market London W1J 7QX
SIX DAYS : 4th - 9th January 2016, 10am - 6pm



THE COLUMBIA THREADNEEDLE PRIZE

**FIGURATIVE
ART TODAY**

Championing the most exciting artists
working in the UK and Europe today

Claim a Free
Catalogue with
this voucher

3 to 20 February 2016 | Mall Galleries, London SW1
www.columbiathreadneedleprize.com | @Fig_ArtToday

MALL GALLERIES
FEDERATION OF BRITISH ARTISTS

COLUMBIA
THREADNEEDLE
FOUNDATION

Image: Yuki Aruga Severance (detail)

Among those who died in 2015...

Politics

Leon Brittan, former Tory home secretary, died 21 January, aged 75.

Lee Kuan Yew, first PM of Singapore, died 23 March, aged 91.

Charles Kennedy, former Liberal Democrat leader, died 1 June, aged 55.

Tariq Aziz, Iraqi foreign minister under Saddam Hussein, died 5 June, aged 79.

Chris Woodhead, educationalist, died 23 June, aged 68.

Denis Healey, former Labour chancellor, died 3 October, aged 98.

Geoffrey Howe, former Tory chancellor, died 9 October, aged 88.

Michael Meacher, Labour politician, died 21 October, aged 75.

Ahmed Chalabi, Iraqi politician, died 3 November, aged 71.

Helmut Schmidt, former German chancellor, died 10 November, aged 96.

Greville Janner, Labour peer, died 19 December, aged 87.

Writers and critics

John Bayley, Oxford don and literary critic, died 12 January, aged 89.

André Brink, novelist, died 6 February, aged 79.

Terry Pratchett, novelist, died 12 March, aged 66.

Günter Grass, writer, died 13 April, aged 87.

Ruth Rendell, crime writer, died 2 May, aged 85.

David Nobbs, novelist and scriptwriter, died 8 August, aged 80.

Brian Sewell, art critic, died 19 September, aged 84.

Jackie Collins, novelist, died 19 September, aged 77.

Brian Friel, playwright, died 2 October, aged 86.

Henning Mankell, novelist, died 5 October, aged 67.

William McIlvanney, novelist, died 5 December, aged 79.

Scholars and scientists

Carl Djerassi, chemist and poet, died 30 January, aged 91.

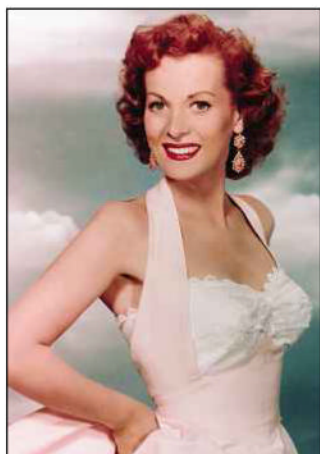
Martin Gilbert, historian, died 3 February, aged 78.



Denis Healey



B.B. King



Maureen O'Hara



Christopher Lee

Sheila Kitzinger, social anthropologist and childbirth activist, died 11 April, aged 86.

Raymond Carr, historian, died 19 April, aged 96.

John Forbes Nash Jr, mathematician, died 23 May, aged 86.

Robert Conquest, historian, died 3 August, aged 98.

Oliver Sacks, neurologist, died 30 August, aged 82.

Lisa Jardine, historian, died 25 October, aged 71.

The world of sport

Richie Benaud, cricketer and commentator, died 10 April, aged 84.

Doris Hart, tennis player, died 29 May, aged 89.

Lord Montagu of Beaulieu, motor museum founder, died 31 August, aged 88.

Yogi Berra, baseball player, died 22 September, aged 90.

Tom Graveney, cricketer, died 3 November, aged 88.

Jonah Lomu, rugby player, died 18 November, aged 40.

Jimmy Hill, footballer and commentator, died 19 December, aged 87.

Film and showbiz

Rod Taylor, actor, died 7 January, aged 84.

Anita Ekberg, actress, died 11 January, aged 83.

Geraldine McEwan, actress, died 30 January, aged 82.

Louis Jourdan, actor, died 14 February, aged 93.

Alan Howard, actor, died 14 February, aged 77.

Leonard Nimoy, actor, died 27 February, aged 83.

Cynthia Powell, John Lennon's first wife, died 1 April, aged 75.

Keith Harris, ventriloquist, died 28 April, aged 67.

Marguerite Patten, cookery writer and TV chef, died 4 June, aged 99.

Christopher Lee, actor, died 7 June, aged 93.

Ron Moody, actor, died 11 June, aged 91.

Patrick Macnee, actor, died

25 June, aged 93.

Omar Sharif, actor, died 10 July, aged 83.

George Cole, actor, died 5 August, aged 90.

Wes Craven, film director, died 30 August, aged 76.

Maureen O'Hara, actress, died 24 October, aged 95.

Colin Welland, actor and scriptwriter, died 2 November, aged 81.

Warren Mitchell, actor, died 14 November, aged 89.

Saeed Jaffrey, actor, died 14 November, aged 86.

Business

Jack Hayward, businessman and philanthropist, died 13 January, aged 91.

Alan Bond, Australian tycoon, died 5 June, aged 77.

Adrian Cadbury, businessman, died 3 September, aged 86.

Gulam Noon, entrepreneur, died 27 October, aged 79.

Cynthia Payne, brothel keeper, died 15 November, aged 82.

Music

Demis Roussos, singer, died 25 January, aged 68.

Steve Strange, singer, died 12 February, aged 55.

Percy Sledge, soul star, died 14 April, aged 74.

Ben E. King, soul star, died 30 April, aged 76.

B.B. King, the King of the Blues, died 14 May, aged 87.

James Last, easy listening composer, died 9 June, aged 86.

Val Doonican, crooner, died 1 July, aged 88.

Jon Vickers, tenor, died 10 July, aged 88.

Cilla Black, singer and TV presenter, died 1 August, aged 72.

Veterans and heroes

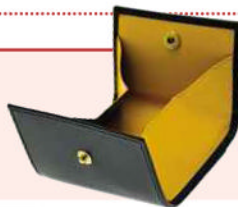
Norman Poole, the first British soldier to set foot in Occupied France on D-Day, died 26 June, aged 95.

Nicholas Winton, stockbroker who evacuated 669 Jewish children from Prague in 1939, died 1 July, aged 106.

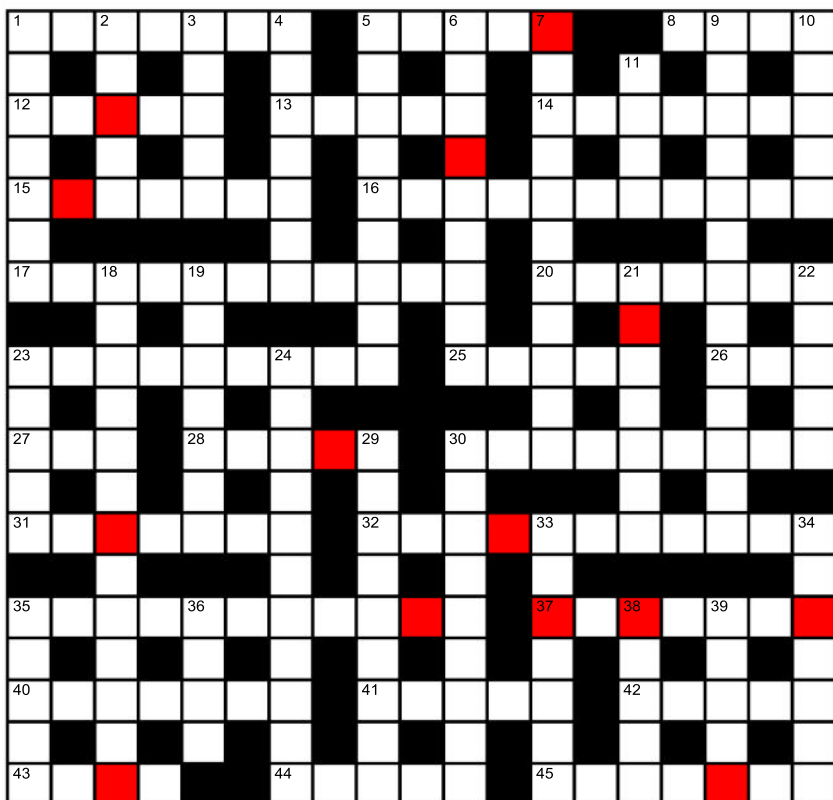
Les Munro, the last of the 19 pilots who took part in the Dambusters raid of 1943, died 4 August, aged 96.

THE WEEK CROSSWORD 985

An Ettinger card case and two Connell Guides will be given to the sender of the first correct solution to the crossword and the clue of the week opened on Monday 11 January. Send it to: The Week Crossword 985, 2nd floor, 32 Queensway, London W2 3RX, or email the answers to crossword@theweek.co.uk. Set by Tim Moorey (www.timmoorey.info)



This week's crossword winner will receive an Ettinger (www.ettinger.co.uk) Brogue Collection coin purse in black, which retails at £150, and two Connell Guides (www.connellguides.com).



Some clues have previously appeared as a Clue of The Week. The red squares read from top to bottom, then up

ACROSS

- 1 What could be put out in Switzerland in the form of housing let? (7)
 5 M Ali's conversion - was to this? (5) (Paul, Guardian)
 8 Brickbats in part of lake (4) (Times)
 12 Pack he'd lead regularly? (5) (Mr Magoo, Spectator)
 13 Look into backing for a deck (5)
 14 First chap and worker refusing to change (7)
 15 Swingers' bar supplying gin and drugs reportedly (7) (DAC, Independent)
 16 Ramshackle hotel dismantled in part of England (3,8)
 17 Alexander's group in student festivity? (7,4)
 20 Info on Morecambe not specific (7)

- 23 Schedule designed for only a little weight (9)
 25 What you get in cold cellar so to speak (5)
 26 What Pif never felt, for Parisian location? (3) (Azed, Observer)
 27 Millions put in providing source of finance (3)
 28 No new civil engineer for the present occasion (5)
 30 Old Russian very blokeish abroad (9)
 31 Who's permitted to enter running heat? (7) (Times)
 32 Belittle pamphlet internally badly formed (7,4)
 35 Manufactured popular line, right for English knitting (4,2,5)

- 37 Spots lease wrong in manuscript (7)
 40 Characters leading prayers really inspire and you pray (7)
 41 Happen to get 200 in 45 minutes! (5) (Hamilton, FT)
 42 British isle sounding as if it's covered in snow (5)
 43 Ill-considered complaint (4)
 44 Recall learning about name in register (5)
 45 Instrument wrapped round clear ceiling window (7)

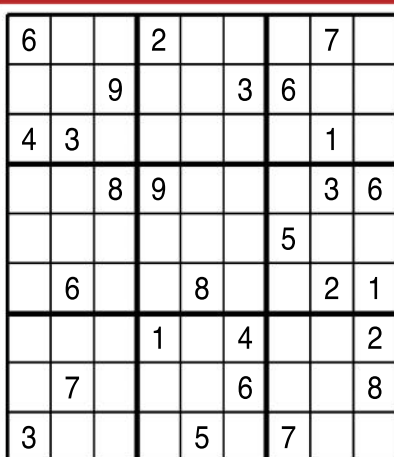
DOWN

- 1 Rabbit produced from magic hat? Terrific (7) (Times)
 2 Place for joyful fanfare with fine female cast? (5)
 3 Scratch before squeezing a head on spot (5)
 4 What to say to show surprise and not seem cultured? (5,2) (Nestor, Independent)
 5 Embarrassed? I lost twice to a kid! (3-2-4) (Klingsor, Independent)
 6 Terrible rip in chair? "I see what you're saying!" (3-6) (Neo, FT)
 7 Representing "we will" with good intentions (7,4)
 9 Lots, initially, on this person's plate (7-6) (S Telegraph)
 10 Sky boxes? They come with strings attached (5)
 11 Temporary release of Welsh footballer on the radio (4)
 18 School fighter's a fool to behave unacceptably (2,3,3,5)
 19 Home stove for cooking within reach (2,5)
 21 Pen myth about attractive maiden (7)
 22 What chronicler keeps pens? (5) (Azed, Observer)
 23 Coin one found in Italian city (5)
 24 Meet in place that's busy? It's often underneath the clock (11) (Phi, the i)
 29 Attempt finish always spoken of (9)
 30 Odd action entering laboratory set up in sort of garden (9)
 33 Pinkerton's superior in Butterfly (7) (Virgilius, the i)
 34 Silent about established small bagpipe (7)
 35 Peter parking around jetty? The opposite (5)
 36 WW1 enemy destroying British missile launch site (4) (Picaroon, Guardian)
 38 One bird seen in Egyptian city (5)
 39 Just get the hell out of here! (5) (Philistine, Guardian)

Clue of The Year: Two-and-six in old money? (6,2,5 first letter P, last letter T) Times

Name.....
 Address.....

 Tel no.....
 Solution to clue of the year.....



Sudoku 529 (difficult)

Fill in all the squares so that each row, column and each of the 3x3 squares contains all the digits from 1 to 9

Solution to Sudoku 528

3	8	6	9	5	4	2	1	7
2	4	7	8	6	1	3	9	5
5	9	1	3	7	2	4	6	8
1	5	8	4	9	7	6	3	2
7	3	9	6	2	8	5	4	1
4	6	2	1	3	5	7	8	9
9	7	3	2	8	6	1	5	4
6	2	4	5	1	9	8	7	3
8	1	5	7	4	3	9	2	6

Puzzle supplied by PUZZLE

Solutions to Crossword 983

Across: 1 Composer 6 Limpid 9 Stay 10 Administer 11 Maria Theresa 14 Seatbelt 15 No Exit 16 Duress 18 No thanks 20 A better place 22 Addis Ababa 24 User 25 Mantra 26 Evensong **Down:** 2 Outrageous 3 Physiotherapist 4 Seattle 5 Ram 6 Lantern 7 Massage parlours 8 Ibox 12 Extinct 13 Silkscreen 17 Smetana 19 Tartare 21 Idea 23 Abe **Clue of The Week:** School with hippy founders ditching conservative belief system (10, first letter P) **Solution:** PHILOSOPHY

The winner of 983 is Audrey Drake from Swansea

Charity of the week



MOAS (Migrant Offshore Aid Station) is a search and rescue charity that has saved almost 12,000 refugees from the Mediterranean Sea since 2014. This year MOAS expanded its life-saving mission to the Aegean Sea and Southeast Asia. The NGO uses a fleet of boats and drones to scan the seas and rescue vessels in distress, usually overcrowded unseaworthy boats filled with refugee families. MOAS was founded by entrepreneurs Christopher and Regina Catrambone after they saw the lack of response to hundreds of drownings in October 2013 off the Italian island of Lampedusa. In 2015 public funding enabled MOAS to expand into a global NGO. Today, thanks to corporate support and individual donors, MOAS continues to act on its core belief - "No one deserves to die at sea". **Donations can be made on www.moas.eu/donate.**

SOURCES: A complete list of publications cited in The Week can be found at www.theweek.co.uk/sources



ercol

Parker Knoll

TEMPUR

DURESTA

HYPNOS



 **early birds**
save even more on famous brands

**VISPRING****All Vispring now 25% off RRP**Up to **4 years** interest free credit* • 42 stores • Freephone 0800 7 830 830 • furniturevillage.co.uk

*Cash price £2400, deposit £240, 48 monthly payments of £45 = £2160. Total payable £2400. 0% APR representative. Subject to status. Written quotation on request. Licensed Credit Brokers - Slough, SL1 4DX. Authorised and regulated by the Financial Conduct Authority. The credit advertised is provided by one external credit provider. RRP = Recommended Retail Price.



**Furniture
Village**

Feel the magic

3 GOLDEN GLOBE® NOMINATIONS
Including
BEST ACTOR • BEST ACTRESS
EDDIE REDMAYNE ALICIA VIKANDER



“THE MOST BEAUTIFUL AND HEARTFELT PICTURE.
A RARE GEM” “BREATHTAKING”

BAZ BAMIGBOYE, DAILY MAIL

SUNDAY EXPRESS

“EDDIE REDMAYNE HAS TRIUMPHED AGAIN
WITH ANOTHER REMARKABLE PERFORMANCE”

LOU LUMENICK, NEW YORK POST

“ONE OF THE MOST BEAUTIFUL
LOVE STORIES EVER TOLD” | “A BRAVE
BOLD
& BEAUTIFUL FILM”

THE SUN, WOMAN

SCOTT MANTZ, ACCESS HOLLYWOOD

“EDDIE REDMAYNE
GIVES THE PERFORMANCE
OF THE YEAR”

REX REED, NEW YORK OBSERVER

“A MUST-SEE FILM”

VOGUE

“MOVING” “EXQUISITE”

ROBBIE COLLIN, TELEGRAPH

EMPIRE

“EXCELLENT” | “VIKANDER IS SENSATIONAL”

METRO.CO.UK

RADIO TIMES

“ALICIA VIKANDER IS A
TOTAL REVELATION” | “SPECTACULAR”
“A TOTAL TRIUMPH”

GLAMOUR

WOMAN & HOME



THE DANISH GIRL

FROM THE DIRECTOR OF 'THE KING'S SPEECH' AND 'LES MISÉRABLES'

IN CINEMAS NEW YEAR'S DAY BOOK YOUR TICKETS NOW

WORKING TITLE

WWW.THEDANISHGIRLTICKETS.CO.UK

